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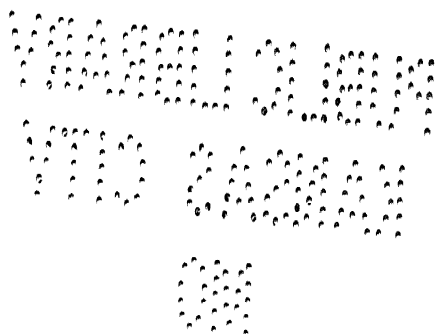
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A FAITH TO
FIGHT FOR



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A
FAITH
TO
FIGHT FOR

JOHN STRACHEY



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To
MY SON AND DAUGHTER

DEAR CHARLES AND ELIZABETH, I want you to read this book ten years from now, when you will be sixteen and fourteen years old. It was written in London during the autumn of 1940. It is too short to include any discussion of the far-reaching political, historical and philosophical issues which it inevitably raises. All that I have tried to do is to write for you a plain statement of what the events of 1940 have caused me to think about the world.

A FAITH TO
FIGHT FOR

The Stake

LAST night we stood on a hill in Surrey, watching. The moon rose and the Nazi raiders began to fly over our Home-Guard Post, coming up from the south. Soon after midnight one came in over Shoreham gap, flying north-east towards London. The searchlights picked him up. He flew high and fast, like a tiny silver fish, glittering in the pool of ten or twenty lights. We heard three thumps from his bombs, the noise of another, higher-pitched, engine, and then machine-guns, as a fighter pilot pressed his firing-button and shot at the Nazi out of the dark. The fighter's tracer bullets were like little comets. The raider fired back. In five fierce seconds of skirmish it was over. The raider had turned and was flying south. The searchlights still followed him, handing him on from finger of light to finger of light. Over Leith Hill he was attacked again. But again he flew on towards the sea, and out of our sight. (The wireless reported this morning that they finally got him just over the coast.)

But that night, and every other night, for every raider the lights can pick up and turn back, ten go on to London with their load. Tonight, for instance, I am writing this in a Wardens' Post in Chelsea. Occasionally the noise of the guns is broken by that grinding crunch of bombs

falling on brickwork or masonry, and, we know only too well, on human flesh and bone.

Yet last night, out on the Surrey hills, with London's barrage only a pretty firework behind us, things were quiet. The moon glided through her quarters; first one planet and then a second came up. The night was long and the sky big; even air-fighting was swallowed up in the hours and the miles. There was time to wonder what we were all doing.

Not that many of us, in this autumn of 1940, have any doubts about what we are doing. From the most expert pilot to the least important Home Guard we are fighting for the very simplest things for which human beings can fight. We are fighting to prevent our subjugation. We are fighting in order that we shall not be compelled to work and live for Nazi conquerors.

We are fighting also in the defence of the actual places in which we live. I, for one, was last night carrying an obsolescent American rifle, with five rounds of ammunition in its magazine, within 500 yards of where I was born. The pilot in that fighter may well have been a Londoner; if so, it was London, with his house in it, from which he turned the Nazi raider back. This is one advantage of a direct physical assault such as the Nazis are delivering upon us at the moment. It gives one the simplest and plainest of all possible war aims—the aim of not being subjugated.

To fight for the independence of one's country and the survival of one's home is elementary; it is elementary in both senses of that word. It is elementary in the sense

that those men who fail to do it have lost the instincts of self-preservation: that those peoples who fail so to fight have lost their ability to live as free peoples. But it is also elementary in the sense that it is only the foundation-stone of a cause, or a faith, for which to fight. To fight against subjugation, like patriotism, of which it is the simplest part, is not enough. It is enough, it is true, to enable us to fight: but it will not prove enough to enable us to win. We shall find this out as the war goes on. As the Nazi assault continues to break in flame about us, we shall need to be perfectly sure not only of what we are fighting to prevent, but also of what we are fighting to achieve. And when that assault has been beaten off, it will be still more necessary for us to know that we are fighting, not only to prevent something so bad, but also to achieve something so good, that we dare to go on to the end.

For the decision to fight out a war is the most serious decision which a people can take. Only a very great cause can justify it. Those noises in the sky are not babies' rattles. They mean that pilots are burning to death. Those swishes and thumps are not practice. Men and women, boys and girls are probably dead since we heard that last one. And in Germany other men fall burning from the skies, and other families are smashed to pieces. How can we dare to go on with it for another moment unless we are exactly sure of what is at stake?

This is what is at stake. Our defeat would mean that we should experience the fate which is now being im-

posed upon the wretched peoples of Europe. At the best, Britain, like France, would be made into an agricultural colony of Germany, our industries dismantled, our population, suitably reduced, permitted to produce raw materials for the gigantic industrial machine of Germany in return for a bare living. No British citizen could hope to rise from a menial position in any sphere of life.

This is what the Nazis are evidently doing to the French. But if we were conquered, there would be no longer any point of resistance in all Europe, and it is probable that the treatment which has been given to the Poles, rather than that given to the French, would be our lot. There is no reason to suppose that the Nazis, once they had us in their power, would not formally enslave us, as they have formally enslaved the Polish people. What that would mean may be exactly envisaged from the measures just taken in the case of the Poles.

“Himmler, the German Chief of Police, has declared that all Poles in the Reich must now wear a badge consisting of a yellow diamond edged with a lilac-coloured band and bearing a large letter P, so that they may be distinguished from the rest of the population. This step is all the more remarkable because even Jews are not thus marked, although it has often been proposed that this should be done.

“No official reason is given for this step, but a circular issued by the Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland (association for Germanism abroad) explains that decent Poles do not exist, any more than decent

Jews. No intercourse between Germans and Poles is therefore permissible. All Germans must therefore see that the Poles in their employment wear this distinguishing mark. Circumstances have necessitated the employment of Poles in the Reich for the duration of the war, but no German must ever forget that he is a member of the *Herrenvolk* (master-race)."

(*Times*, Sept. 20th, 1940.)

Except that the letter on the arm-band would, no doubt, be "E," instead of "P," the Nazis might be expected to behave to us in no other way than this. We are engaged in a total war. Defeat in such a war is total defeat. And total defeat equals slavery. It is doubtful if the British people, in spite of the vigour of the resistance which we are putting up, and in spite of the desperately narrow margin which separated us, last summer, from such total defeat, have really envisaged what the consequences of defeat at the hands of the Nazis would be. So far most of us are fighting simply because we are outraged even at the idea of our suffering an ordinary, old-fashioned sort of defeat, such, for instance, as Germany inflicted upon France in 1870, or such as we inflicted upon Germany in 1918. Few of us have realised that we have entered a new epoch in history in which what happens to a nation defeated in war is something quite different from, and incomparably more terrible than, what we have been accustomed to in Europe during recent centuries. I am not suggesting that the Nazis would exterminate us. On the contrary, they would probably have

a use for our labour, or for the labour of a remainder of us, at any rate. For many of us have hardly begun to realise that when we talk of the Nazis desiring to subjugate and enslave us, we are not using some figure of speech; we mean that the Nazis intend to make us into their slaves.

There are today a dozen subtle economic devices by means of which a whole people can be enslaved. Enslavement means, precisely, the taking from a man, or a people, of everything which they produce over and above what is necessary to keep them alive. And nothing is more certain than that a Nazi victory would mean that the whole of the surplus, over our bare needs, which we produce, and all the civilisation, opportunity, hope, culture and progress which are built upon that surplus, would be taken from us. It is true that we share out amongst ourselves the huge surplus which we produce, over and above our bare needs, with such vile inequality that there are some sections of the population which get little of it. And so in the event of a Nazi conquest they would only lose that little. But, as we should bitterly discover, it is only the relatively small, worst-off, chronically unemployed, and most horribly exploited, section of the British people which would not lose immensely, even in sheer material things, by enslavement to the Nazis. If we may judge by what the Nazis imposed on their own people (and they would not, to put it mildly, be likely to treat us better!), the real wages (what wages will buy) of the British people as a whole would be halved. We are not accustomed to think that our wages

are unduly high as it is. Consider what it would be like to live—and to live with no hope of ever securing any improvement—upon a standard only half as high. Nor would this sheer drop in the standard of living be any more than the beginning of the miseries which we should all experience as the hopeless subject-people of the German *Herrenvolk* (master-race). Truly those who are now best off would lose most, but there are hardly any of us who would not lose at least half our wages, and the whole of our hope.

Very few people in Britain have yet realised that the subjugation against which they are fighting will be of this total kind. That does not very much matter in most cases, because ninety-nine out of a hundred of us do realise that quite enough is at stake to make it a thousand times worth while to endure all, rather than yield. But it would be well if those few careless fools who sometimes wonder “if it could be any worse if Hitler did come” should understand what simple, concrete and specific things—in terms of hours, wages and opportunities of life itself—are at stake.

But what are we to say of those supremely clever fools who tell us that our conquest by Hitler would mean for the British people merely “a change of masters”; who tell us that we have, therefore, no interest in preventing the subjugation of the country? We must say that here is an over-simplification so grotesque that it becomes a downright, thumping lie. It is perfectly true that we should (and we will) take hold of more and more of the

surplus which we produce, and distribute it far more equitably. In the process we shall end the present powers and privileges of the British employing and capitalist classes. It is true that, on pain of defeat, we must at least begin to do this, not "after the war," but here and now, as an indispensable part of the very process of preventing our subjugation by the Nazis. But to say that it makes no difference to us whether we are, nearly all of us, in varying degrees exploited—as we undoubtedly are—by a very small number of our fellow-countrymen, who own the industries of our country, or enslaved by the Nazis is, I repeat, a lie of the first magnitude. It is literally mad to compare the permanent, final and hopeless enslavement which must result from a total defeat at the hands of the Nazis, with the exploitation which we suffer at the hands of the British capitalists today. For we can, and shall, end our present exploitation. We shall not end it, it is true, without further and immense struggles and difficulties. But the British people have won their present freedom and advantages by such struggles, and we certainly shall not fail now. But if we, and with us all Europe, or all the world, are once conquered by the Nazis, there will be literally *no* way in which we can ever—or for generations, at the least—end the enslavement, in the exact sense of that dreadful term, which we should then suffer.

The criminal irresponsibility of those who suggest that whether we are conquered or not does not matter to us, arises from a failure to realise the new, total and, above all, permanent, nature of conquest at the hands of a Nazi

or Fascist state. It is a failure to sense the whole character of the new epoch which the world has entered. This new epoch has arrived as a consequence of new methods of production in general, and of the production of new weapons of war in particular. Its essential character is that once a people has lost its last war-'planes and tanks (the decisive weapons of today), *all* further resistance to the will of the conqueror is impossible until and unless help comes from without. To talk today of an unassisted people's uprising or revolution *after* their conquest by a power such as the Nazis, is about as ludicrous as to talk of the possibility of a child of two overthrowing the power of its parents. If the Nazis ever achieved their final purpose of world conquest, and thus eliminated all other centres of independent power, they could not be challenged for an indefinite period. The force and, above all, the *speed* of modern weapons of war make it possible for a conqueror to rule at least a continent, and probably the whole planet, in perpetuity, once he has subdued it.

The clever fools have failed to understand this. We ordinary men and women of Britain, when we say that we are fighting for freedom and liberty, show that we have at any rate an inkling of it. We sense that we are fighting to keep open the possibility to work and live for ourselves; to change and, if we so wish, overthrow our governments; to preserve, or to transform, our economic system for ourselves as we like; to dispute, to quarrel, to fight, if we must, amongst ourselves; instead of to serve, hopelessly and for ever, the Nazi will.

But if enslavement is what we are fighting against, what are we fighting *for*? We shall never finally break the Nazis' will to world conquest unless we discover our own positive aim. Are we out for our own world conquest, as an alternative to Nazi world conquest? Nine out of ten of us will say "No" to that. What *are* we out for, then? Faced with this question, most of us would say something about "decency."

This hopelessly inadequate, colourless, pathetic little word "decency" is the best we seem to be able to do to express our positive purpose. It is a monument to our inarticulateness. We are sometimes inclined to be rather proud of such inarticulateness. But that is very wrong of us. If we let our ideal, our cause and our faith remain unexpressed, we go far towards betraying them. Ideas and ideals which are unexpressed are half-stifled, dead-alive, near-impotent. Men neither fight, nor die, nor live for them.

For Heaven's sake, then, what do we mean by saying that we are fighting for "decency"? We believe—and we are right—that the Nazi creed is so debased a thing that if it is imposed upon the world the light of hope will cease to shine. We believe—and we are right—that the Nazis both preach and practise that the nature of man is so irredeemably bad that he cannot be ruled except by means of lying, force, hatred and terror. We mean to prevent that ideal from being imposed upon the world. But all this is still negative. What ideal do we pit against this black Nazi creed? To mutter, with evident embar-

rassment, something about "decency and all that sort of thing" simply will not do.

There are only two things to pit against fear, force, lies and hate. They are truth and love. It is not till the world crumbles about you—physically if you happen to be in a bombed house, spiritually if you happen to live anywhere in Western Europe in 1940—that you come to know that these two principles are the only things worth fighting for, and consequently worth living for.

That last clause is the crux of the matter. The faith which will overcome the Nazis' faith must be not only worth fighting for; it must also be worth living for. The black Nazi creed is found by millions of Germans to be worth fighting for. The Nazis fight hard enough. But men will never be able to live for the Nazi faith. It will be impossible for the Nazis, even if they conquer the world, to create a way of living which will be anything but a hell on earth.

The ruin of the old world has revealed that these two principles, and they alone, can redeem human life from wretchedness and hopelessness. There is nothing else to do in life except to serve these principles, no matter what happens to Europe, to Britain, or to America; no matter who, if anyone, conquers the world, no matter what catastrophes destroy this or that people, no matter what tyrannies are set up, or—yet again—no matter what are the victories of the mind of man. Therefore it is precisely now, when the world seems to be physically consumed with hate: it is now, when force, fear, lies and

ruthless power alone appear to be the realities of human life; it is now that it is time to call upon men to serve truth and love. If anyone asks us how, amidst the bombs, we can even speak of such ideals, we answer that it is the bombs themselves, because of their ultimate purposelessness and insignificance, that have proved to us that there is nothing else worth doing with our lives.

But *are* we now fighting for truth and love? That is not so easy to do. If you are telling lies all the time both to yourself and to the world; if at least half the things you do show that you really agree with the Nazis that men can only be ruled by fear, force and hate; if you are so maltreating your fellow-countrymen and women, who are fighting beside you, that it is clear that, in fact, you have no love for them at all—then the more you talk about love and truth the more you will make those great words to stink. In order to fight for truth and love it is necessary for us to transform our dealings with each other. It is necessary for us actually and seriously to start to share burdens and sacrifices: to prove in action that men can be moved by other things than fear and force. We are a long way from having done that so far.

But we are not hopeless, either. That odd, blind, obstinate instinct which made us fight for London, instead of “sensibly” surrendering like Paris, arose in us, not only because we did not fancy being a subject people, but also because we did still believe in something, even though we had forgotten its name. We obscurely knew, this last September, that there was something which must not, and should not, perish from the earth.

II

Truth

TRUTH and love are ideals; they are ideals in the sense that, while the world can never be wholly governed by truth and love, yet the attempt so to govern it alone gives significance to our lives. Our generation can be sure that this is so because during the last twenty years a large part of the world has become more and more dominated by lies and hatred: and it has become a more and more hellish place.

Truth and love are moral principles. They are standards, that is to say, by which human conduct can be judged and the words "good" and "bad" applied to it. I grew up in a period in which moral principles were deeply discredited. If, for example, I had been told when I was twenty years old that the things worth living for were two moral principles, I should not have known what people meant. And no wonder moral principles were at that time discredited. At that time the meaning of the words "moral" and "immoral" had been so fantastically impoverished that it is only a slight exaggeration to say that "moral" meant no more than the repression of one's sexual impulses and "immoral" their release! Now the attitude of mind and the conduct of human beings in relation to their sexual impulses is an impor-

tant, complex and largely unsolved question. But to reduce all ethics and morality, as people used to do, to this single question, simply showed that that generation had got sex on the brain. They had tried to solve all the problems of sexual life by the unbelievably crude method of imposing the maximum possible degree of repression in all cases. The result was an obsessive preoccupation with this one subject. Accordingly, moral principles were then almost always invoked in the name of such a mess of hypocrisy, self-deception, cowardice and fear of life that nobody who could think for himself would have anything to do with them.

It has turned out, however, that the moral approach to human problems is by no means obsolete. On the contrary, as the world sinks in havoc, and the continents are piled with the bodies of dead nations, these two ideals, truth and love, emerge as fixed stars. They emerge as the sole objectives towards which we can even desire to struggle. There is nothing mystical about this. It is not that these ideals have been magically revealed to us as the principles which we must serve. They are moral principles, but they are not "abstract moral principles." They are good for certain definite reasons. There is a straightforward, common-sense explanation of why the world becomes a cesspool when men deny truth and forget love.

A man is being truthful when he strives accurately to interpret the reality which he finds about him. That may sound an absurdly dry definition of a supreme ideal. But

it is an immensely difficult thing to do. The human mind is so constituted that we all experience strong and sustained impulses (what people used to call, in the language of theology, temptations) to believe, say and write things, not because they are true (*i.e.*, give the best available description of reality), but because they are pleasing to ourselves, or because we judge that they will be pleasing to those who hear us, and so will enable us to control other men and to hold or acquire power for ourselves. We are all subject to these two immensely strong impulses, which have to be overcome before we can even strive to be truthful. These impulses are separate and distinct, although they often operate together upon a man. There will be no success in the struggle for truth if we overlook the need to combat either the one or the other of these powerful temptations to lie.

Here I must begin to say something about history, or the account which we have preserved of the past of mankind on this planet. You may not see immediately what such allusions to history have to do with the question of what we are fighting the Nazis to achieve. But it is only by recalling what mankind has so far achieved on the earth that we can realise what is at stake today. Today not only our freedom or enslavement, but the whole character of the next epoch in human development almost certainly depends on what happens in this war. Or, rather, it depends on our victory or defeat in a wider struggle against the forces of human degeneration and regression everywhere, a struggle of which our resistance to the Nazi attempt to enslave the British people is itself

only a part. For we are at one of those decisive moments, which have occurred four or five times before in human history, when whole centuries of human development will be carried forward, or destroyed, according to what happens in a few years of crisis.

The first of the anti-truth impulses, or temptations, is the impulse to say, write and believe, not what best describes reality, but what will please and reassure ourselves. This impulse springs from a primitive fear of reality. In the early days of the human race, when mankind was very young and weak, reality showed itself to be no friend of man. Nature was overwhelmingly terrifying, and man could not bear to look her in the face. So long as men yielded to that impulse of terror they could not hope to control reality. For so long as they could not bear to face facts, they remained the slave of facts. It was not until men could face facts that they began to be able to change them: to become more and more the lords of facts.

This natural terror of facing reality is the first of the great impulses which have to be overcome in order to serve the truth. But today the second anti-truth impulse is even more important. It is above all this second impulse which today dominates, and destroys, the world. This is the impulse to say, not what we know to be true, but what will be acceptable to others. This is the great temptation of our times. For, while yielding to the first impulse leads merely to inability to control nature, yielding to the second impulse often leads to power over our

fellow-men. In this field the opposite and enemy of truth is not falsehood, but power.

Men in the more advanced countries have in our epoch made extraordinary progress in overcoming the impulse to say and to write, not what is true, but what they wish were true, about natural forces. It is the best thing which mankind has yet done on the earth. It is science. The whole vast progress in the art of controlling his environment which man has made in the last 6,000 years—an achievement which has raised him from half beast to half god—is the fruit of his attempt to tell the truth about the universe as he has discovered it to be. That attempt arose out of men's need to control their environment in order to live. But what immense obstacles had to be overcome before this attempt could succeed! How profoundly *unnatural*, in the sense of how difficult and how arduous, it was for men to look the universe in the face! How great was the courage of man when he began calmly to study the world in order to control it! Many centuries of effort were needed for men to gain enough control of themselves to enable them to see nature as it is, and not as they desperately wished it were. The medicine-man, the magician, the alchemist, the priest, all reported that nature was obedient to their wishes and heedful of their prayers! For—and this is the point—both their hearers, and also they themselves, longed that it should be so. Their longing for reassurance governed their thinking. It was not till man began to report on the facts, regardless of whether they were pleasant or unpleasant, that

he began to find the way to make the facts less unpleasant. It was not till we could bear to disbelieve in miracles that we began to be able to perform miracles.

The history of science is, in one aspect, the history of this effort. But science did not develop smoothly. Not only the existing stock of knowledge, but also the scientific, truth-seeking, method itself, were several times deliberately wiped out for centuries at a time. At first sight this must seem an extraordinary thing. It is difficult to understand why men should have deliberately attacked the first scientists, or "philosophers" as they were then called, and forced them to give up the truth-seeking method. But they did so, repeatedly. In order to understand how this could have happened we must understand how the second of the anti-truth impulses interlocks with the first. The scientific, or truth-seeking, method has repeatedly been wiped out, because the truth was found to be more and more displeasing to the most powerful people to whom it was being told. Therefore those who wanted power for themselves, through the favour of the powerful, ceased to tell the truth. And those who obstinately continued to be scientific were killed.

III

Why the Truth is Murdered

It is only too interesting for us, who live in a comparable epoch, to study why men turned away from the service of truth in earlier periods of history.

In this part of the world the first big successes of mankind in learning how to control natural forces were won in Assyria, Persia, Egypt and Greece some 6,000 years ago. It was here that men invented agriculture. They found out, that is to say, enough about the way in which plants grow to make them grow to order in certain places, and enough about certain animals to tame them and breed them for the sake of their milk, meat and wool.

On the basis of these tremendous and marvellous discoveries the first civilisations, as we call them, grew up. Gradually a body of written, recorded knowledge about natural forces was formed. In particular the seasons were studied and measured, by means of observing the sun, moon and stars. Knowledge of numbers and of geometry was acquired for building. Above all, and especially in Greece, men began to get hold of the scientific, truth-seeking method, or attitude of mind. They ceased to be so scared of natural forces that they could only cower before them, make sacrifices to them, try to propitiate them with magic, or pretend that there were powerful

men and women called gods, sitting up in the sky, who could be persuaded to be kind. They began calmly and seriously to study nature. It was the first great breakthrough of science. It seemed that men had really got hold of the right method of solving their problems; it seemed that now nothing could stop them; that it was only a matter of time before they got command of nature (as at long last we so largely have done today).

But it did not happen that way. There was to be no steady, smooth development from the early discoveries of the Greek philosophers to the scientific triumphs of the modern world. Something happened which set back human development for more than fifteen centuries. The whole scientific way of looking at things came up against the interests of the classes which ruled the ancient world. The ancient world was ruled by slave-owners, who had the greater part of the work of the world done for them by slaves, in return for a bare keep. The slave-owners had no interest in lightening the labour of their slaves, by means of the practical inventions which would have come from the scientific, truth-seeking method. On the contrary, they had an intense interest in ensuring that not only the minds of their slaves, but of all their poorer fellow-countrymen, should not be fortified and enlightened by the truth of science. For if men once begin to study, and to manipulate, natural forces, they will little by little come to disbelieve in myths and fancies and elaborate State superstitions. And if they do that, it will in the end become impossible to stop them from seeking for a truthful explanation of the organisation of human

society itself. They will begin to apply the scientific, truth-seeking attitude of mind to their relationship with their fellow-men as well as to their relationship with nature. If society is organised irrationally—if it is organised for the maintenance of the wealth, privileges and power of a few, and not for the well-being of all—such rational examination will spell the doom of those who rule.

It was in order to prevent, at all costs, the truth-seeking, scientific attitude from spreading from the study of nature to the study of the social system, that science was murdered in the ancient world. The truth was murdered by the rich men of Rome—the patricians, as they were called—who had conquered the then known world and established their Empire over it. They murdered the scientific method by means of ruthlessly applying to the educated men of that time, who were mainly Greeks (Greece was one of the nations which the Romans had conquered), the second of the basic anti-truth impulses which I described above. The Roman world-rulers, who, since they alone could read, were the sole audience for which the learned men would write, or in practice speak, made it clear that anyone who wished for toleration, or, of course, any measure of approval, power and influence, must drop the whole attempt to discover the truth about nature, or, far worse still, to discover the truth about the way human society and the State were organised. The Roman world-rulers “purged” the philosophers in order to ensure that these philosophers should cease to be scientists and should conform to the synthetically created religion of the Roman State. (Ten years ago we in mod-

ern Europe would have found a difficulty in conceiving of such a process: now we know exactly what it is like.)

The murder of the truth in the ancient world was one of the greatest of all the setbacks of human history. It killed for some fifteen centuries the very possibility of those extraordinary scientific achievements which have actually taken place in our own epoch. Yet it had to happen if the position and privileges of the slave-owning Roman world-rulers were to be maintained. For further scientific advance was incompatible with slavery; and slavery was the very foundation-stone of that Roman world. Slavery was maintained, and the first important attempt of men to serve the truth was broken. Power murdered truth. Men had to wait another fifteen hundred years before they gathered the fruit of practical achievement which was on the point of becoming possible from that first attempt to serve the truth. I should like to repeat that statement. *Men had to wait for some fifteen centuries after almost all the necessary knowledge had been discovered before they got that command over natural forces which we now have.*

For example; the steam engine is the basic practical device for that degree of the command over nature which we have so far achieved. And just before the scientific method was finally extinguished in the ancient world a man called Hero had invented the steam engine. But it could not be used without the abolition of the ancient, slave-owning social system. And that abolition was not accomplished. So the steam engine was not used for fifteen centuries after it was first discovered! For fifteen hun-

dred years the work of the world was largely done by human muscles and nerves, in many cases under the crack of the slave-driver's whip. For fifteen hundred years the world was held up, progressing indeed in some things, but going far back in others. Generation after generation of men and women, with feelings like ours, loving each other as we do, just as potentially intelligent as we are, were born, lived and died in what historians call the dark ages. For hundreds of years the great Roman world-Empire broke up in a welter of purposeless, endless civil wars. Time after time whole provinces and whole cities full of people were massacred for no reason and in no cause, good or bad, but the interest of this or that commander, or this or that party amongst the rich. For century after century everything got worse for everybody throughout the Western world. Each generation of children had poorer, more insecure, narrower, more ignorant lives than the one before it. Mankind grew hopeless, and barbarous in its hopelessness. The Western world had lost its way, because the light of truth had been put out. Such were the consequences of the murder of the scientific, truth-seeking method by the Roman slave-owners. This is the measure of the importance of the issues which hang upon whether or not the truth is to survive today. Whether it does survive depends upon whether enough of us, in enough countries, cling at all costs, including the cost of our lives, to the ideal of the service of the truth.

During the past five hundred years men have in the main succeeded in the attempt to tell the truth, as far

as they know it, about nature. A cataract of scientific achievement has resulted. But now we have come again to an epoch when the service of the truth, spreading from the study of nature to the study of human society, threatens the power of those who rule the world. Once again a people, not unlike the Romans in some respects, has set out on an attempt to conquer the world. The first result of a Nazi conquest anywhere is the extirpation of all real attempts to apply scientific thinking to human society. A Nazified world would sooner or later destroy the whole attitude of mind on which the continuance even of the natural sciences themselves ultimately depends. The Nazi spirit is profoundly and consciously anti-scientific, and must necessarily be so. Once more the impulse to say what will please those who hear, and so give power to those who speak, threatens to murder truth. Truth will be murdered, and the world will sink into the night again, unless the Nazis are overcome. For the Nazis are the most thorough enemies of the truth which the world has ever seen.

The truth is being attacked today for the same reason as it was murdered under the Roman Empire. During the past five hundred years a type of social system—namely, capitalist democracy—developed with which the study of nature—science, in the narrower sense—was compatible. It was this which provided the possibility of our epoch's fantastically rich scientific achievements. But for some time now two counter-tendencies have been at work, both of which have been destroying this compatibility between the scientific, truth-seeking attitude of mind and the world

of capitalist democracy. In the first place the capitalist economic system has got so old and clogged up in its own accumulations of capital that the rich are no longer much interested in new scientific inventions.

From here on I shall have to refer fairly often to "the rich," and to do so in uncomplimentary contexts. I ought to explain at once that rich people, as opposed to poor people, are not endowed with any double dose of original sin. I was born, if not rich, then pretty well off myself, and so I am not likely to be prejudiced against rich people. The fact is that this is not a personal question at all. The rich as individuals are no worse and no better than anyone else. But as a class they have interests which are flatly incompatible with making this world into a place fit for the rest of us to live in. The only way that an individual from the rich class can avoid betraying the ideals of truth and love is to join with the people in their struggles. And quite a number of individuals from the richer classes do so. I will describe below how it is that the interests of the rich have become contrary to the interests of the rest of us. Moreover, in Britain today it is essentially a tiny class of super-rich men and women who monopolise the control of the industries of the country, whose interests conflict so flatly with the interests of the people. There are tens of thousands of very well-paid people, who may think of themselves as rich, whose interests are, at bottom, the same as those of the people.

In capitalism's enterprising youth the rich really were keenly interested in science, if for no better reason than that most new inventions offered someone an oppor-

tunity for highly profitable enterprise. But that is no longer true. Today, in peace-time, there is chronic "over-production." A new scientific invention seems to the controlling monopoly capitalists to be a nuisance. Why should they be in favour of making two blades of grass grow where one grew before, when they cannot sell even one blade! And so the whole capitalist world begins slowly but surely to lose its interest in science, even in the ordinary, narrower sense of the study of natural forces.

But the second anti-scientific tendency is much the more important. The scientific, truth-seeking attitude of mind is, I repeat, tending to spread. It is tending to spread from the study of such things as atoms, electrons, cells and protoplasm, etc., to the study of such things as the causes of historical events, the way in which men and women get their livings under different economic systems, the equality or inequality of the way in which money is distributed between different classes of people, to the question of whether this form of distribution is or is not justified, and to the question of whether a new economic and social system would not be preferable. It is this tendency of the scientific, truth-seeking method to spread from the study of natural forces to the study of human society which is responsible for the fury of the Nazis' attack upon it. It is this which has made the Nazis, and everyone who has been influenced by the Nazis (and they are not by any means all of them Germans!), to repudiate the very conception that it is a supreme duty of man to serve the truth. For it would be quite wrong to

say that the rich are not interested in this new social sort of science. They are very interested in it, and are determined to destroy it if they can. They are determined to destroy it because its spread must undermine their power. For if once men come to inquire calmly and scientifically into the nature of social and economic systems, they will be unlikely to conclude that the present system is either justified or reasonable.

On the other hand, the people support this new social application of the truth-seeking attitude. The people, when they have not been too deprived of educational opportunities to have access to it, have always been deeply interested in science, even in the narrower sense of the study of natural forces. For this study was alone capable of lightening human toil. But the people, whenever they can get at it, are ten times more interested still in the scientific, truth-seeking method applied to society and human relations.

Thus there exist today two totally different attitudes to science and truth. On the one hand, the rich, in spite of the fact that they have incomparably better educational opportunities, since they reserve to themselves almost all the best means of access to science, are becoming slowly but steadily indifferent to physical science. And they are rapidly becoming hostile to social science. The people, on the other hand, although they face immense difficulties in getting access to science, although to this day they have been deprived of the opportunities of getting at the truth to such an extent that they often fall a prey to power-seeking liars; the people, on the other hand, do strive for

the truth, and slowly, infinitely painfully, and suffering frightful losses and setbacks, struggle towards it. No one can yet say if the struggle of the people will in our day be sufficiently successful to prevent a new murder of the truth on an even more terrible scale than the murder of the truth which happened fifteen centuries ago. But it is the people alone who will try to save the truth.

Therefore all those who serve the truth must serve the people. The service of the truth is today inseparable from taking your place in every phase of the struggle of the people. He who deserts the people's struggle, either by siding with the rich or by indifference and neutrality, deserts the truth.

IV

The Truth and Socialism

SOCIALISM is the child of the attempt to apply the scientific, truth-seeking attitude of mind to human society. It is a first attempt, that is to say, to apply, in practice, to men's relationship with each other that same scientific method which has obtained such triumphant results from the study of natural forces.

I have spent my life in advocating Socialism. I have done so in books, in pamphlets and newspaper articles, by making speeches, by sitting in Parliament, and by delivering lectures, chiefly in America. The events of 1940 have made me far more certain than ever before that Socialism is a right and true thing. If we had even laid the foundations of Socialism in Britain during the twenty-one years of peace between 1918 and 1939, we should not have had to go through what we are going through now, and are likely to go through in the immediate future. Our family, for instance, would not have been broken up, and millions of other families would not have suffered enormously worse things than we have. We should not have had *this* war. And, if we had had to face a war, we should certainly have won it. For not only is some form of Socialism the only workable basis for a modern country, but events have now proved that some measure of Socialism,

at any rate, is of the first importance in giving a country sufficient unity to win a modern war.

The kind of country which Britain and America are today, and which France was yesterday, is called a capitalist democracy. We now know that this kind of country, if it does not succeed in transforming itself in the very process of its resistance, falls to pieces when any really strong force hits it. We now know this because in the last few months a whole series of capitalist democracies has fallen to pieces under the attack of the German Nazis. Czechoslovakia, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and now France itself, have just been destroyed. It will be perfectly clear to everyone by the time you read this letter that these countries were defeated, not for any accidental reason, nor from mere military or strategic mistakes or deficiencies, but just because they were, and they remained, unmodified capitalist democracies. They were defeated, that is to say, because they were and remained a kind of country which is incapable of survival any longer. This is not yet clear to everyone in 1940. Many people are inclined to say that these states were defeated simply because Germany had much stronger armaments than they had. And that is true, as far as it goes. But why did Germany have much stronger armaments? These capitalist democracies were, taken together, as productive as Germany, and could have provided themselves with equally strong arms. Taken together with Britain, they were considerably stronger. Moreover, they were quite heavily armed seven years before the war broke out, when Germany was entirely unarmed. Yet when the actual

fighting happened they found themselves at a hopeless disadvantage. It ought to be as clear to us now, as it will be to you in 1950, that the real reason for their defeat was that they showed themselves to be inherently incapable of survival. Their lack of adequate arms when the necessity arose was merely one symptom of their general incapacity to live.

The truth is that it is no accident whether a nation finds itself well armed, economically strong, and with reliable allies, when it needs these things. A country cannot have these basic sources of strength unless it has achieved a national unity and national will to acquire or to retain them. In turn, a nation cannot have this national unity and will unless it has some common purpose, some faith, to live for. Now, the indispensable material basis of national unity and strength is a just (and, because just, efficient) economic system. We now know, not as a matter of theory, but as a matter of experience, that an economic and social system strong enough to enable a country to survive in the world of today must be Socialist in character.

You will want to know what it is about Socialism which gives a country strength. It is this. The essence of Socialism (and this is true of every kind of Socialism, from the worst and most distorted to the best) is that the material interests of the individual are subordinated to the community. A country is Socialist to the extent to which the purely self-seeking, profit-seeking, interests of individual citizens are, by one means or another, brought under control and subordinated to the welfare of the country. Naturally, to do this makes a country strong. In fact, a country

cannot be strong unless the material interests of its citizens are thus brought into its service. But this subordination of individual material interest to the community may be a forced subordination, imposed by a tyrannical government, controlled by a small minority of the population. In that case the Socialism which will result will be a forced, disfigured, distorted kind of Socialism. Even this forced kind of Socialism may be able to make strong the country which adopts it; but it will betray everything for which true Socialism stands. On the other hand, this indispensable subordination of the individual's material interests to the community may be entered into freely and of their own will by immensely the greater part of the people. In that case a country will achieve genuine Socialism, in which the spirit of the individual, far from being stunned and battered into conformity by a tyranny, will find a much greater freedom than it has ever found before. For in genuine Socialism the individual fulfils himself precisely by his own unforced identity with the common weal. But for that to come about, the people must come to believe in something in common. The people as a whole must find a faith for which to live.

Socialism, however, is not only a particular way of organising economic life. It is, I repeat, the first great attempt to apply the scientific, truth-seeking method to the problem of our relationships with each other.

This first attempt to apply the scientific, truth-seeking method to the organisation of human society was begun about a hundred years ago. It was begun by a number of

different men, in a number of different countries. But the name of Marx will always be known as that of the man who took the first, most difficult, and therefore most important, steps in laying down a genuine social science: in establishing, that is to say, the beginnings of a body of ascertained knowledge about the way in which human society has grown up in the past, and functions today.

Marx, Engels and their contemporaries discovered, in the broadest outline, how human history works. They started out from the simple observation that what by far the greater part of mankind is now doing, and has been doing ever since there have been men, is to produce. They pointed out that it was a fact which might well serve as the corner-stone of a science, that human life could not be sustained except by ceaseless work on the production of food, clothing, shelter and all the other needs of man. Therefore, they continued, is it not clear that human society is built upon this productive activity; that human society is built, in plain language, upon work? Have not the never-ceasing changes in the character of human society, which we trace from its origin in the life of primitive tribes right down to the complex civilisations of today, themselves been caused by changes in the *way* people have produced? Has not society changed with changes in people's methods of work? Is not the key to history that each type of social system has arisen as a result of one particular stage in the development of the methods by which people get their daily bread? Is it not clear that as men have evolved incomparably more efficient and developed methods of production, so they have

been enabled to live in incomparably more complex and developed societies?

But the socialists taught that there was more to it than that. Human history has not been a smooth, bloodless and pleasant ascent from primitive barbarism to complex civilisation. It has not been *merely* "the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind," as the historian Gibbon called it. There has been an extraordinary development from the simple and primitive to the complex and civilised. But that development has been always accompanied, and frequently interrupted, by frightful conflicts, wars, revolutions and bloody struggles of every kind. What has been the cause of these struggles? Why has social evolution been accomplished in this appalling way?

The socialist conclusion is that this has been so because of the clash of interest between the rich and the poor. As soon as men learnt how to produce more than enough for their own wants, communities became divided off into a large majority of poor people, who did nearly all the work, and a tiny minority of rich people, who did the directing, governing, praying, fighting, or some of whom, in the more developed stages as today, just nothing at all. (It was not wrong that this division into classes should have taken place. On the contrary, without such specialisation of function and division of labour no progress could have been made.) Now, the clash of interest between these two classes of people, whom I have called, for short, the rich and the poor, is what has made human history into a blood-bath. That clash has been all the more bitter and ruthless because it has often been unconscious

and has almost always been uncomprehended. The interests of the classes have clashed with especial violence whenever (as today) major changes in the way men produced were forcing society into new forms. For the interests of the rich inevitably became bound up with the maintenance of the old form of society. The people alone, and they often most blindly and confusedly, were driven to break up the old societies and to establish the new and more developed societies. The more closely you study the epochs of human history, with their procession of religious wars, international wars, wars of Imperial conquest, civil wars, with their revolutions and their counter-revolutions, the more you will find that this struggle between the rich and the poor is the reality lying, often deeply buried, under the otherwise meaningless turmoil.

This is the truth which socialists teach on the subject of human society and its development. This is one of the greatest truths that has ever been discovered. It explains, in broadest outline, what history has been about. For example, until this basic discovery had been made it was impossible to understand what had caused the truth to be murdered in the ancient world; to understand why Greek Science was dropped dead in its tracks by the Roman world-rulers. The explanation which I have repeated above is obvious as soon as you understand the general principles on which social and historical forces have worked. But until that discovery had been made, the whole thing was incomprehensible. (Incidentally, that is why such a lot of history, as it is still taught, is, as I am afraid you will find, so infernally dull. It is dull for the

very good reason that the teachers do not [in the most literal sense] understand what they are talking about. Naturally, therefore, they can make no sense of it.)

This discovery of the socialists about history was such a great one because, like all other genuine discoveries, it showed us how to control something by showing us how it worked. The physicists, by showing us how thunder worked instead of crouching in terror before it, have enabled us to use the force of thunder—namely, electricity. The socialists, by demonstrating how the far more dangerous and terrifying forces of history have worked, have shown us how to use and control these historical and social forces.¹ We have not yet got control of them, or else this war would not be raging, and we should not be separated so that I had to write you this letter. But, then, the discovery is very new, and we have been very inept. If the Nazis were to conquer the world, this discovery of how history works would probably be lost again for hun-

¹ Your aunt Bonella, whom I saw the other day, told me that one of her neighbours comes in to shelter with her in air raids. The other night there was a thunder-storm going on at the same time as a raid. There was the devil of a peal of thunder, and Bonella, thinking to reassure her neighbour, said, "That's not a bomb, that's the thunder."—"Oh dear, oh dear, is that thunder? I thought it was only a bomb," said the neighbour, making for the nearest cupboard to hide in! She had been quite calm under the real danger of the bombs. But she was terrified of the almost completely imaginary danger of the thunder. That is a good example of how deep people's primitive, traditional fears are, of how huge and heroic was the task of science in making people calmly study the thunder, and so learn to control it, instead of hiding in the cupboard from it. Now we have the still bigger and more heroic job of making people (and, above all, making ourselves) face, study and control the historical and social forces, which are today causing the bombing.

dreds of years. That is one of the most important of the reasons why it is worth fighting in this war.

Socialism in practice means, then, the subordination of individual material interests to the community—in order that in and through the community everyone may realise an incomparably higher degree of freedom than has ever been possible before. And the underlying theory upon which Socialism is founded consists in the discovery of what have been the true motive-forces in history. For a comprehension of these motive-forces will alone enable us to control history. This we can never do unless we serve the truth so well that it conquers the new field of social relations.

V

Total Lying

SOCIALISM is the first organised attempt to use the newly discovered truths about historical forces for rebuilding human society. But it is far more difficult to tell the truth about human society than about natural forces. In the first place, the impulse to say and believe about society, not what is true, but what is pleasing to oneself, is immensely strong if one is rich. The rich (with, of course, individual exceptions) find it impossible, not merely to tell the truth, but themselves to see the truth, about society. They genuinely cannot see things from the point of view of ordinary people. They are too far away from social reality to get contact with it.

The second of the great anti-truth impulses affects not only the rich, but everyone else as well, in preventing a direct and rational approach to the study of society. This is the impulse to say what will please those who hear, and so will induce them to give up power. This impulse is the supreme obstacle which has to be overcome before the truth about human society can be told. The forces with which he who strives to speak this kind of truth must contend are formidable and ferocious. For today the truth about human society is dynamite. It is dynamite lying under the cherished interests, property and privileges of

the most powerful people in the country. Such people consider it literally a matter of life and death that the truth about the communities in which we live should neither be taught nor learnt.

That is why telling the truth about human society is now, and always has been, a difficult and rather risky business. It is a business which is bound to bring those who undertake it into conflict with the rulers of nearly every country today. It is not, on the whole, in our sort of countries (the capitalist democracies) that those who seek to tell the truth about society have been seriously persecuted; it is rather that our rulers have shown their displeasure by successfully excluding such people from any share of power or influence. So long as they can do that, it is almost as effective as persecution; for it is little use just telling the truth, if it is impossible to make the truth prevail.

But how, you will ask, can the rich have managed to do this? After all, in our kind of countries they have not prevented people saying what they liked. The people could listen; for the past sixty or seventy years they have been able to read. And the truth about the way human society and history work is as naturally acceptable to the people as it is unacceptable to the rich. For it is supremely in the people's interests that man should at last get control of historical and social forces, and so be able to put human society on to a sane, common-sense basis. Why, then, do the people not seize as greedily on this newly discovered truth of how history works as the rich, naturally and instinctively, reject it?

You may well ask. The first answer is, of course, that some of the people do just this. Large socialist or communist movements of one kind or another exist in many parts of the world. But the explanation of why *all* the people do not find their way to the truth about the social system is different, and much more complicated. In the first place it is because the rich take good care not merely to avoid telling, or for that matter themselves knowing, the truth about society. They take good care not merely to exclude from power and influence all those who are telling such truth, but they also take immense trouble themselves to tell an enormous and complex system of lies and confusions and half-truths about society. In other words, they make the most determined and persistent efforts to confuse and to control the minds of the people. And to an important extent they succeed. They twist the minds of the people so that an immense wall of prejudice stands between the people and the truth; so that the people too have the utmost difficulty in coming to the truth; so that the truth, which is in any case an austere thing, becomes unacceptable to the people also; so that the people themselves will reject the truth, and there will be little need for the rich to keep it from them.

It is this active twisting of the minds of the people by their rulers which produces the very worst features of the life of our times. For it is out of this process that the opportunity of Fascism has arisen. This is how it happens. Men like Mussolini and Hitler seek power with an intensity and violence of purpose which are almost unimaginable. Forty or fifty years ago they would have sought it

quite simply by saying things that would have pleased the rich in the hope that the rich would employ them in positions of power and influence. But things are more complicated today. Because the capitalist system is becoming more and more unworkable, and is bringing greater and greater disasters on us, the power of the rich is not unchallenged. The people are restive. In the countries where the worst disasters have happened, the road to power lies through pleasing, not only the rich, but, if possible, the people also. *But the quickest road to power lies through pleasing the people as they are, after the years of mental twisting at the hands of the rich.* This is how Hitler, for example, has got power in Germany. Hitler has never tried to say what was true. He has considered only what would be acceptable to the maximum possible number of people, and so would bring him to power.

One of the most important and deadly aspects of the rise of Fascism is that a quite new intensity of lying has appeared in the world. For the reasons just given, there is, and there always has been, great and persistent lying about social questions in every country which is dominated by the rich. For the rich can only maintain themselves in power by a combination of force and deception. And in our kind of countries deception has been much their more important weapon. But this attempt on the part of the rich to keep us controlled and confused has, hitherto, always been met by a sturdy effort on the part of the people and their spokesmen to get at the truth. Nor have the rich attempted directly to suppress the people's struggle for the truth. Thus the spokesmen of the rich

have themselves had to have a certain regard for the truth, since any too obvious lie would be quickly exposed by the popular voices, which have always succeeded in making themselves heard also.

But when once a country falls under Fascism all this is ended. The people's voices, which challenge the spokesmen of the rich, are suppressed. The lies of the Government and the rich become the only words which break the silence of the subjected peoples. This is total lying.

The Nazis in particular have abandoned all attempt to tell the truth. Never before in all history has this been done so whole-heartedly. The Nazis have wholly sacrificed truth to their ravening appetite for power. They have set up a kind of government which is maintained by highly expert lying to an extent never known before.

Lying on this scale, total lying, lying in which the liars think solely of what will increase their power, and not at all of what is a true description of reality, is a most formidable thing. It is itself a kind of force; it is a raping force, applied to men's minds instead of to their bodies. It can succeed in controlling the actions of millions of men.

This total lying does something to the people whom it controls. Perhaps it produces an actual physical change in the grey matter in their heads, a change which we could detect and measure if we had sufficiently subtle methods of investigation. Prolonged exposure to total lying may well damage, in the end irreparably, the finer interconnection between the brain-cells, so that the brain be-

comes incapable of some of the highest and most difficult of its activities, such as the exercise of independent judgment. Total lying, as it is practised by the Fascist governments, is a kind of loathsome brain surgery. Men's faculty of independent judgment, which has become inconvenient to their rulers, is cut out.

Such political brain surgery can be extremely effective. It may cure the confusion and indecision which lack of leadership may have allowed independent judgment to cause. For an essential characteristic of total lying is that no contradictory views whatever can be expressed. The people are never permitted to compare two contradictory assertions about anything and judge for themselves which is the nearer to reality. In this way it is possible to make people do almost anything. But when you have made them do it, they have ceased to be quite people. They have become simpler, coarser, less developed types of organisms, capable of responding to direct orders alone. Fascist, or total, lying amounts to a method of forcibly conditioning people in such a way that they will never even desire to disobey the government. It is a systematic attempt to reduce men and women to the level of childhood; to train them to follow blindly any leadership that is given to them.

The service of the truth is utterly incompatible with this attempt. It is an indispensable aspect of the service of the truth that every man shall be free to seek the truth for himself. For those who serve the truth will never commit the arrogant crime of claiming that they are in exclusive possession of the truth. The truth is an ideal to which

man never attains, but towards which he struggles, and by his struggle redeems the world. Only those who pretend that they have monopolised the truth will dare to suggest that they have the right to shut off mankind from opinions contrary to their own. Hence the opposite of Fascist, or total, lying is not some equally exclusive dogma, labelled "the truth," but the principle that every man is free, in the ultimate resort, to seek the truth in his own way.

All this does not mean, however, that it is right to leave people "free" from the best teaching, guidance and leadership which are available. If those men and women who show themselves, in the incomparably varied and searching processes of life itself, to be the most intelligent, vigorous, public-spirited and far-seeing—who show themselves, in a word, to be leaders—are prevented, by a fatal misunderstanding of the necessities of social life at the present stage of human development, from actually teaching, guiding and leading the community, then stagnation and confusion will result. It is fatal to allow the right of independent judgment in the last resort, to result in a paralysis of leadership. For men will always choose even the tyranny of total lying rather than the agony of stagnation and confusion in which a paralysis of leadership must result.

The horrible abuse on the part of the Nazis and Fascists of the indispensable function of guidance and teaching; their deliberate blinding of the people by means of total lying, tends to drive us, by reaction, into denying the

need for any teaching. Such a reaction would be a fatal error. An immense gulf is set between the Fascist method of training, or conditioning, men by means of total lying, and the training of men by means of genuine teaching.

True leadership and training are often called education. But both methods use education, only the one teaches nothing but what the government thinks it convenient that the people should believe, while the other teaches people to attempt to recognise truth for themselves. Both are methods, in a word, of training human beings. The question at issue, therefore, is whether training, which is indispensable, is or is not to be a training in the duty of seeking the truth. I have not seen the difference between these two sorts of training better put than by a Cambridge professor, I. A. Richards, speaking last summer in Chicago. He said:—

“We may either train our successors by the methods appropriate in teaching tricks to dogs—deprivation, exclusion of alternatives and thought-provoking explanations, quick reward and sharp punishment, and drill—I sometimes wonder how much Goebbels learned from Pavlov—or we may educate them to be free citizens. . . . The first way is much easier. You kill off those who won’t learn, as we have seen in Poland and Czechoslovakia and will soon be seeing in France. The other way is harder and it takes the whole human being in an endeavour which is humanity growing more human. At the moment, whether it can continue at all any-

where in our century depends on something I can scarcely speak about here, the willingness of the men and women of England to keep on dying for it."

My considered view is that it is well worth while that some tens of millions of people here should stand the risk (it is, after all, quite a small risk) of being killed in order that some millions of children, including you, should have the chance of the second, or human, kind of training instead of the first, or dog, kind of training.

But, having said that, it is at once necessary to call your attention to the words, "*the chance of the second, or human, kind of training.*" Because most people in our kinds of countries do not actually get much of the human kind of training at all! (You may be in that position yourselves.) It is reserved for the rich. It is so reserved, not quite exclusively, and not quite so exclusively in America as in Britain, but yet on the whole pretty effectively. So you see it isn't a clear-cut case of I and everybody else here fighting for "the right" against "the wrong," or for "the truth" versus "the lie." Our enemy is wrong and tells lies. But he and we have the greatest lie of all in common: the lie that the good things of life are equally open to the rich and to the people. So even in the context of the kind of training people are going to get, both in childhood and afterwards, what we are fighting for is not the preservation of our countries because we think they are all right as they are; what we are fighting for is the possibility to make them into the right sort of places. But that is enough. It is enough for me, at all events. I, for one, would

fight on indefinitely if only in order to prevent you two getting the kind of training which you would get in a world which the Nazis had conquered. I would fight on indefinitely to prevent that, even if there was only a chance—and there is only a chance—of your getting a reasonably good education of the other, or human, kind. It seems to me to be worth while to do so.

VI

We Do Not Yet Serve the Truth

WHEN our Government denounces the lying of the Nazis and Fascists, it implies that nations such as Britain, or America, are today fit to be champions of the truth.

I suppose the Minister of Information would not deny, if you pressed the point, that the British Government, for instance, sometimes told lies. But yet, by and large, he would claim, the British Government, and governments like it, did try to serve the truth, and so had the right to denounce the Fascist, or total, liars. But this claim is not justified. It is true that the attitude of such countries as ours to the truth is different from that of the Nazis and Fascists. But it is not a wholly creditable kind of difference.

The Nazi Government is fundamentally pretty frank about its lying. It has consciously and explicitly abandoned the service of the truth. The truth for a good Nazi has become that which will help Germany to conquer the other peoples of the world. For him there is no other kind of truth. If the Nazi Government decided that it would help the cause of German conquest to allege that twice two made five, then the whole German Press and wireless would be devoted to announcing this discovery, and mathematics could go and hang itself. If it was decided

that it would help Germany to conquer to announce that it was wicked for parents to love their children, then the German Press and wireless would be devoted to announcing this discovery, and to denouncing those parents who indulged in the unnatural vice of loving their children. And the Nazis in their more theoretical, as opposed to popular, publications would agree that these "new discoveries" about mathematics and family life were intended simply and solely to strengthen Germany for conquest. The question of whether it was or was not an accurate description of reality to say that twice two made five, or that it was unnatural for parents to love their children, simply would not arise. The truth for the Nazis is what makes Germany strong for conquest, nothing more and nothing less.

The attitude to the truth of such Governments as those which have ruled Britain during the past ten years, for example, is different. They never abandoned the claim to serve the truth. But their utterances and actions belied them. What they did and said was designed, not, as a matter of fact, so much in order to strengthen Britain for conquest, as in order everywhere to strengthen the power of the rich. They pretended to be serving the truth, by giving the most accurate description possible of reality, when in fact they were merely protecting the interests of the rich. This hypocrisy became so bad that it has driven some people actually to prefer the total lying of the Nazis, as somehow more frank and open, to the hypocrisy of the capitalist democracies. There was something peculiarly pretentious and hypocritical about the

way in which recent British Governments, for instance, pretended, during the nineteen-thirties, that they regarded the League of Nations as an instrument for preserving the peace, when all their subsequent actions showed that they regarded it as a not very effective instrument for protecting the interests of the rich.

All the same, it is hasty thus to prefer the Nazis' frank abandonment of the truth to the hypocritical betrayal of the truth by the governments of the capitalist democracies. It has been said that hypocrisy is the tribute paid by vice to virtue. The very stealth by means of which our recent governments abandoned the attempt to serve the truth, in favour of a fanatical service of the rich, reflected the fact that in our sort of countries the ideal of the truth has not been abandoned by the people. And this is an immense thing. It means that our people's independence of mind has not been subdued. It means that we have not let any government batter and bludgeon us into a passive, animal acceptance of that government's own debased standard of what is the truth. It means that there still springs up in our hearts a genuine and spontaneous faith in the truth, which is outraged by the organised lying of governments. And it also means that the basic conception, or standard, of truth, as the most faithful interpretation of reality which is possible at any given time, has not disappeared from the minds of our rulers either, however terribly they betray that standard. These two factors have caused extremes of hypocrisy on the part of our recent governments. But they speak of hope for us.

In the last resort, however, the question of which is

worst, the frank disavowal, or the under-cover betrayal, of the truth is not important. For, even if we consider (as I do) that the lip service which our types of governments have paid to the truth is a sign that the people are fundamentally sound, yet it is certain that such lip service will not suffice, as a faith to pit against the Nazis. You cannot fight a lie with a half-truth. You will never overcome total lying except by a total service of the truth. And our existing types of societies are inherently incapable of such unqualified service to the truth.

They cannot give it because of a cancer at their roots. That cancer springs from the fact that they are *capitalist* democracies. It is not difficult to say what is wrong with capitalist democracies. In them you may vote as you like; but you must work as the boss tells you. You may choose your member of Parliament; but your employer chooses you to work for him—if you are given a chance to work at all. Democracy promised liberty, equality and fraternity. Capitalism developed exploitation, poverty and coercion. Just as the absolute rights of property have stood between us and getting enough of the 'planes, the guns, and the tanks, with which to defend ourselves against the Nazis, so too it is the lies which our governments have to tell, in order to defend property rights, which prevent us matching our truth against the Nazi lie.

How can we hope to survive unless we begin to cut out this cancer? In a sense we do stand for the truth, for we have not, like our enemies, committed the ultimate sin of denying even the *attempt* to serve the truth. But we have defiled the truth which we still claim to serve. We have

defiled the truth with our pretence that we have already achieved equality and liberty, when, in fact, we have slackened even in the struggle to achieve them. We have utterly forgotten how rigorous a business it is to serve the truth.

Now the issue is squarely before us. Are we as serious in our service of the truth as are the Nazis in their service of an all-subjugating Germany? As yet we are not. The German Government has dared to impose much more serious burdens on the German people, including the German rich, than our Government has dared to impose upon our rich. Not until we show ourselves as passionate and fanatical servants of the truth as the Nazis are passionate and fanatical servants of German conquest shall we begin to prevail. And that means, above all, a serious limitation of the property rights and incomes of the rich of Britain. Until we show that we are becoming a new kind of country, we shall remain incapable of making the truth into our cause. And yet cannot the blindest of us see now that that cause is alone worth fighting for? Cannot the blindest see that this is the only cause in which our peoples will in the end be willing to fight and die? Those members of our present Government who cannot see this must give place to other men who can. It is too late even to attempt to match the Nazi idolatry of an all-conquering Germany with an opposite idolatry of an all-conquering Britain, or an all-conquering America. The British and American peoples are too mature for that. We know that a war of that kind could mean no more than the empty victory of this Empire over that Empire: the meaningless

triumph of yet another conqueror of his fellow-men. We will not die in such a cause. An attempt to make us do so will result in the Nazis meeting no effective resistance and so conquering the world.

That would be an all-destroying disaster. But it will happen unless the British and American peoples take for themselves a cause for which they will find it in their hearts to fight. If they do not succeed in making such a cause their own, they will grow feeble and indifferent. Moreover, the truth will not become our cause by means of any amount of claiming that it is ours. It will be exclusively by means of what we *do* that we shall become in fact, and not in words, the champion of the truth. Time is most certainly not upon our side in this matter. Unless soon we begin to become a new kind of community, we shall not survive.

VII

Need We Bother About Truth?

THERE is another opinion about all this. Some people believe that what they would probably call "all this fussing about truth," or about any other moral principle, is beside the point.

Such people would say something like this: "You have just admitted that by far the greatest enemy of the truth in the world today is the power and privilege of the rich. You have agreed that again and again in history the truth-seeking, scientific attitude to the world has been murdered by the rich because it had begun to undermine their power. You have stated that Marx's discovery that this was the cause of the shattering setbacks suffered by humanity is one of the supreme scientific discoveries. You have stated that, unless we grasp the significance of this discovery, we are certain to betray the truth ourselves. Don't you see that not only does the truth stand no chance unless the vested interest of the rich in its suppression is overcome, *but that if and when the power of the rich has been overcome, the truth will automatically prevail?* Not only is the power of the rich a deadly enemy of the truth; it is the only enemy of the truth. Once you have abolished the power of the rich, men will naturally, easily and directly find more and more of the truth by means of a

study of both nature and society. In a socialist society there will be no impulse or temptation to do anything else but tell the truth; governments, for example, will have no object in distorting or suppressing opinion in any way. Therefore all this talk about the service of the truth as one of the foundation-stones of a faith by which to live, is nonsense. All that matters, in order that the truth shall prevail, is that the power of the rich should be broken. Unless this is done, the truth is bound to be murdered again. If this is done, nothing more is required."

I believe that the first of these propositions is correct, but not the second. Unless the power of the rich is abolished, the truth will once again be murdered. But it does not follow that when the power of the rich has been abolished the truth will automatically prevail. For the vested interests of the rich are not the only enemy of the truth. It has not turned out to be the case that it is the power of the rich alone which makes it difficult for men to tell the truth. There are other impulses which prevent men giving the most accurate interpretation of reality of which they are capable.

One of these impulses is, I repeat, those primitive fears which for centuries upon centuries prevented the study of natural forces. These fears have been partly overcome in such countries as Britain and America. But they still exist, and will continue to exist for a very long time. They do not today constitute an insurmountable obstacle to the study of nature, to science in the narrower sense of that term (though there still exist in many countries organised anti-scientific tendencies in some of the religious denom-

inations). But this primitive fear, which drives men to think and say, not what is true, but what they wish to be true, still constitutes a most formidable obstacle to the study of the truth about human society. No one who has practical experience of political work should be able to doubt that this impulse is there, and that it cannot be explained away by saying that it is merely due to the hold of the rich over men's minds. The truth about human society is an inherently hard fact to face. It is a fact as hard for us to face today as the truth about natural forces was hard for our ancestors to face. It was hard for primitive man to face the fact that natural forces were not the manifestations of gods and goddesses who could be propitiated, but were events which could not be influenced or controlled except by achieving the seemingly impossible task of understanding them. So today, in the period of the dawn of our understanding of social and historical forces, it is inherently hard for us all, including the majority of the people themselves, to face the fact that the havoc caused by these forces is not due to the wickedness of this man or that man, or the mistakes of this or that government. We are all powerfully tempted to suppose that the world's catastrophes are due to such personal mistakes because, if they are, we may hope to see our troubles remedied by better men or wiser governments. But if our troubles are the result of the whole structure of present-day human society, we have to face the fact that they can only be remedied by means of the double achievement of first understanding, and then reconstructing, our whole social system. How can it be denied that there is a natural and

inevitable reluctance to face such a truth as that? It is a reluctance which the rich can, and do, exploit; but it is there, and it will remain there for a long time yet.

If men have an inherent difficulty in facing the truth about society, then it is still necessary, for this reason alone, to found our faith upon the service of the truth. The struggle *against* the vested interests of the rich is only part, though an indispensable part, of the struggle *for* the truth. And it will be found that it is impossible to win the struggle *against* the vested interest of wealth, except as a part of the struggle *for* the truth.

But there is another, and still more important, reason why we must found the first part of our faith upon the service of the truth. The second enemy of the truth is not lies, but power. Now, the power of the rich is merely the main contemporary form of power. There can be other forms of power. Power and wealth have usually been bound up with each other, but they are not the same thing. There can be power without wealth—as in the case of an army, for instance. And this kind of power without wealth may also be the enemy of the truth.

This question is of great practical importance, because the indispensable struggle against the rich cannot possibly be waged without the organisation of this other sort of power. The power of the rich can only be overcome by the counter-power of the people. The Labour movement is the form in which this people's counter-power is organised. Experience has shown that the necessity to organise this people's power provides a new impulse, or temptation, to men to desert the truth. The organisa-

tion of the people's power, indispensable as it is, provides a new temptation to think and say, not what is true, but what we judge will be pleasing to our hearers. In such circumstances everyone is under temptation to please, not the rich, but those who hold effective control of the power which has had to be organised in order to overcome the power of the rich. By saying what is acceptable to those who control power, instead of giving the most accurate interpretation possible of reality, men can gain influence, favour and personal power for themselves. Moreover those who themselves control the people's counter-power will be under temptation to desert the truth for the sake of any lie which will help to maintain them in power. It is to blind oneself to all human experience to suggest that these temptations will not continue to operate, as deadly enemies of the truth, for long after the power of the rich has been overcome.

To suppose that they will not involves the view that those who control the people's power will, neither during the struggle with the rich nor after it, have any interests which will conflict with the service of the truth. Now, this view is based on a vital truth; nevertheless, it is so great an over-simplification that, in practice, it amounts to a disastrous error. It is perfectly true that those who control the new people's power will not have the fatal, murderous, vested interest in the suppression of the truth which is held by the rich. That is why the abolition of the power of the rich is indispensable. But to jump from this to the conclusion that henceforward no one will have any interest which will conflict with the truth; that conse-

quently men will experience no impulses or temptations to depart from the truth; and that it is, therefore, beside the point to uphold the service of the truth as one part of a faith by which to live, and for which to fight—to jump, I say, to some such conclusion as this is catastrophic nonsense.

We should be in a position to settle this question upon the basis of the twenty years' experience of the Soviet Union. For there the power of the rich was broken. Therefore we should be able to say definitely whether or not the anti-truth impulses disappear automatically when that happens, making any further conscious effort to serve the truth unnecessary. But, unfortunately, the facts about Soviet political development in this, and other, respects are so violently in dispute, and I, for one, have found it so prohibitively difficult to assess the evidence, either by means of the visits which I have made to the Soviet Union or by means of a study of the literature on the subject, that I must tell you at once that I cannot base any conclusions on this evidence.

There is no doubt that a struggle for power has gone on within the organisations of the Russian people's power, and that in this struggle the weapon of lying has been used to the full. Trotsky, Bukharin, Kameneff, Zinoviev and many other leaders of the Russian Labour movement, from time to time, and in different combinations, conducted a most intense struggle for power against Stalin and his associates, for example. Nor do I doubt for a moment in the course of that struggle that they used lying as total as it is possible to conceive of; nor that there was

lying on the other side of the struggle also. At first sight this experience would seem to prove conclusively that it is indispensable to carry on the struggle for the truth after the power of the rich has been broken. But it may be argued, and is argued, that this is not so. It is argued, by all members of Communist parties, for instance, but also by many other Marxists, that these struggles within the Russian Labour movement have been merely the reflection of the fact that the power of the rich in Russia was not finally broken in 1917. It is argued that it is the influence of the Russian rich, formidably supported by the still unbroken power of the rich of the rest of the world, which has caused these terrific, and infinitely costly, struggles within the organisations of the Russian people. This same justification can be, and is, made for the undoubted fact that the Soviet Government, in the course of these internal struggles, has built up a monopoly of information and propaganda which appears to resemble that of the Fascists. It is said that this rigid control of opinion has been an indispensable weapon in the struggle with the forces of the Russian rich, formidably supported from without; that, lacking such a control, the power of the Russian people would inevitably have been overthrown.

This argument must not be hastily dismissed. Clearly the desperately threatened vested interests of the rich peasants played a most important part, for example, in the deadly struggles which rent the Communist party of the Soviet Union between 1928 and 1938, and which led to conspiracies, wrecking, murders, attempted risings, purges, serious economic difficulties, the trials and the

executions. Equally clearly the unrelenting hostility of the governments of the rest of the world, which are still controlled by the rich, has been a potent influence causing these desperate struggles for power in Russia. But, even if it were agreed that these factors were sufficient to account for what has happened, all that would be demonstrated would be that a struggle for power, in which the weapon of lying will inevitably be used to the full, will continue long after the power of the rich appears to have been broken. Consequently, the struggle for the truth will be, for as long ahead as we can see, indispensable, if the world is not to sink into filth. To suppose otherwise is to fall into the error of regarding the breaking of the power of the rich as something which can be done once and for all at a particular decisive moment. But it will require a whole historical period to break the power of the rich. The process will be an extremely complex and diversified one. During this epoch of intense and terrible struggle it will be ten times more necessary than ever that we should strive as never before to uphold the standard of the truth. For if we do not, then, when the power of the rich has been finally and irrevocably broken, we shall find that the cost has been so overwhelmingly high that, as in the case of the abolition of slavery and the coming of the dark ages, it will be hard to say whether mankind has gained or lost.

It may be that ultimately, when the economic and social life of the world has long been organised on a fully co-operative basis, no one will have any interest in the suppression of the truth, because no one will have any inter-

est in acquiring or retaining power over his fellow-men. But the actual epoch ahead of us is one of intense struggle, in which the question of power is at issue every moment. And it is a great mistake to think that the question of power reduces itself to the question of the power of the rich or the power of the people. Things are far more complicated than that. Around and across that central struggle for power between the rich and the people many other struggles for power—struggles for power within the people's own forces, for example—go on, and will inevitably go on for a very long time yet. The people's power, which must be organised in order to prevent the rich from murdering the truth, will not be automatically and immediately free from the abuses which power has always hitherto carried with it.

This obvious fact has led some people, called anarchists, to oppose organising a people's power in order to overcome the power of the rich. This is the worst sort of foolishness. It is absolutely necessary for the people to organise their own power. But they will be disappointed and deceived if they suppose that all the dangers and problems of power will automatically disappear in the case of their own power. For a long time to come after the vested interest of the rich in the suppression of the truth has been abolished, men will be tempted to seek power at the expense of truth. Therefore the conscious effort to serve the truth will still be necessary as one of the two corner-stones of a faith which alone can save the world.

We may say, if we like, that this necessity will arise

merely from the defects in men's nature left over from the long centuries during which we have lived under the distorting power of the rich. It may be so. It makes little difference. The fact remains that for us, in our day, and so far ahead as it is useful to think about, the temptation to deny the truth in order to win or hold personal power and favour will still be there: and, unless the world is to become a hell, this temptation must be fought. If the ideal of the service of the truth is abandoned in the course of the struggle to overcome the power of the rich; or if that ideal is dismissed as a meaningless distraction from the real task, then, after the struggle has been won, the truth will not automatically prevail. The people's struggle must be waged in the name of the truth. It will be waged ten times more effectively if it is waged in the name of such a faith.

VIII

The First Part of a Faith

OUR defeat or victory in this war turns on whether we, in time, begin to serve the truth. And, conversely, our victory or defeat will decide whether the very conception of the service of the truth is, or is not, to perish from the earth.

We have only to read history to see what the world will be like if we allow the Nazis to destroy that truth-seeking method of thought and work upon which all the real achievements which man has ever made have been based. In this sense people are justified when they say that the future of humanity depends upon the issue of this war. It is true that our victory will do no more than keep alive the possibility of continuing the never-ending struggle for the truth. But that is enough; if that were the only stake—which it is not—it would be a thousand times worth fighting for. For the total victory of the Nazis would end the very struggle to serve the truth, certainly in our part of the world, and possibly throughout the world, and for centuries of time. That struggle, in the epochs when it was going forward, made possible godlike achievements for mankind; despairing ages of darkness and retrogression occurred whenever it was being beaten back.

Nor is it difficult to understand how total lying, such as the Nazis practise, in the end abolishes the very conception of truth and falsehood. In such conditions truth becomes, I repeat, nothing more than what the government says. Falsehood becomes nothing more than what the government denies. When things get to that point a system based upon total lying is bound to show weakness. It is always the grand object of governments, and those whom they represent, to stay in power. Truth for them becomes anything which will keep them in power. Falsehood becomes anything which might tend in any way to threaten their power. When you get as far away from reality as that you begin to destroy yourself. Reality is avenged on you. For not only your duped people, but you yourself, cease to be able to describe, see or understand reality in any way. The whole of human society becomes a nightmare, and it will finally break down.

Unfortunately for those of us who have to fight it, the society which the Nazis have established in Germany has by no means lost contact with reality to that degree. Hitler and the Nazis have one simple, primitive, but quite definite, criterion of truth and falsehood, besides that of what will keep them in power. For the Nazis, I repeat, truth and right are what will increase the power of Germany and enable her to subjugate other peoples: falsehood and wrong are what do not serve this end. Now, this conception of truth is far enough away from reality to make life into a hell on earth, not only for non-Germans, but for many Germans also. For the truth consists no more in that which will increase the power of

Germany than it consists in that which will increase the power of Britain or America. But we must face the fact that this Nazi standard of truth—this Nazi faith—does provide some sort of objective standard by means of which people can guide their conduct. It provides the simplest, lowest, most primitive, most tribal, sort of faith, or standard of the truth, which men have ever used. It is a standard much lower and more primitive than those which have been provided by the great religions. But, such as it is, it does provide a point of union and strength round which the Nazis can mobilise the German people. It is by the use of this standard that a measure of restriction on the property rights of the rich was achieved in Germany. In fact, if you examine any of the efficient, intelligent and apparently benevolent things which the Nazi government has done (and there have been such things) you will find that they all, without exception, have been done in order to make Germany strong for conquest.

This is easy to see in the case of by far the greatest reform which the Nazis accomplished before the war—namely, the abolition of unemployment. The Nazis did not abolish unemployment for the sake of freeing every German worker from the vile injustice of being denied the opportunity of productive labour; they abolished unemployment as a by-product of their programme for the super-rearmament of Germany for conquest. They were able to abolish unemployment (for to do so involved the above-mentioned restriction of property rights) because they believed in *something* (i.e., conquest) more than they believed in property rights. Again, in so far as the

German government has built sound houses for the German workers and given them attractive holidays, etc., it has done so, not for the sake of the workers, but because it considered that these things would strengthen Germany.

The Nazis have been able to do things which have seemed like miracles to the outside world because they have believed in something: they have had a faith. It has been a primitive, low kind of faith. But it has been a faith. And any faith is stronger than no faith. But such a low, irrational kind of faith as the belief in the mission of the Germans to subjugate the other peoples of the world must, at the very least, arouse a counter-faith of those other peoples; it must arouse in them the counter-faith that it is not their mission to be subjugated by Germany.

Such a refusal to be conquered is our first, indispensable, natural, healthy reaction to the Nazi faith. But in itself it is not enough: by itself it can do no more than demonstrate the innate self-contradictions of the Nazi creed. It will do this by the simple demonstration that two can play at that game. But for a faith to live by we must have something more. Almost any other faith, when we get one, will prove itself better, higher, and therefore stronger, than this Nazi nation-worship.

The Nazis and Fascists are building a hell-world by means of this debased conception of the truth as anything which will strengthen the nation. For any other purpose than that of national conquest truth has ceased to exist in the Fascist countries. Let me give you two instances of what I mean, the first from Italy. Marshal Balbo, one of

Mussolini's chief lieutenants, was recently killed in North Africa. The Italian Government announced that he was killed in an air battle with British aeroplanes. After his death every Italian newspaper extolled Balbo as a supreme Fascist hero. The Italian government lauded him to the skies. He was held up as a model to Italian youth. But it is almost certain that Balbo was not shot down by British aircraft at all, but was murdered by the Italian government itself because he was opposed to fighting the war on the side of Germany.

This murder of Balbo was merely one example of a whole series of occurrences of the same kind. It is in the nature of the situation that we do not know exactly what happened in these cases—as I say, the very idea of what is *true*, in the sense of what has actually happened, has disappeared in the Fascist countries.

Another instance is afforded by the case of the German General Fritsch. It is fairly clear that his death was arranged for in one way or another by the German government. These are two cases in which when, even after the man has been murdered by the government, the lie that he is a national hero is still kept up. Judicial murders, by which employees of the government, from the top to the bottom, suddenly lose favour, disappear, and are either killed or permanently imprisoned, are everyday things. I am not talking about the humanity or inhumanity of this, or what causes it. But think of the effect that such murders must have in destroying the people's sense of reality, in abolishing the very idea of truth and falsehood in men's minds. For instance, amongst at any rate

the immediate Italian garrison in Libya it must have become known that Balbo, far from dying a hero's death in air combat, had been coldly murdered by the Italian government. But it is more than any Italian soldier's, or civilian's, life is worth to say so. The very conception of a man judging for himself, and concluding that this thing is true and that thing is false, is destroyed. And once that has happened, what hope can there be for any one of us?

Indeed, we know from experience that, once that has happened, there is no hope for the men to whom it has happened. The world has been without the possibility of private judgment often enough before. It has been in that condition more often, and for longer periods, than it has been in the condition which men usually call "freedom," such as my generation has known and such as I will fight for you to know. So we know that the total destruction of private judgment leads to a dead, hopeless, pointless existence in which there really is nothing to live for.

I am well aware of how little private judgment most men are able to exercise even in Britain and America. But for that little it would be a thousand times worth while to fight, if need be for ever. It would be worth while to fight for that little even if we did not believe in the possibility of steadily increasing our opportunity for private judgment. For without it men and women become not quite men and women. Therefore the personal consequences to ourselves, by way of enslavement to the Nazis, would, from a historical point of view, be the least important effect of our total defeat. A total Nazi victory over all Europe would be one of those extraordinary and catastrophic

turning-points, which have occurred once or twice before in history, in which whole centuries of human progress and achievement are lost in a year or so. It is much better that we should go on fighting indefinitely rather than that you and other children should grow up into a world from which the very concept of the truth and its service has been extirpated. Moreover, for once in a way, we civilians, writers, speakers and the like have a right to say this sort of thing. In all former wars the trouble was that when writers said that they would fight on for ever rather than yield, they meant, if they were civilians, that they would rather that their country's troops should fight on for ever rather than yield. But this time we in London are having the good fortune to have the matter put to a personal test. At the moment living and doing A.R.P. work in London (although, as war risks go, it is a very small risk) is a participation in the war comparable to, say, that of troops, out of the line, experiencing a light bombardment. Therefore one is, to some extent, in a position to say from personal experience whether or not it is worth while to fight on. And it is. Only those people who are at least half Nazis themselves can doubt that it would be worth while for every single building in London to be destroyed rather than to allow the Nazis to have their will of the world.

So much as to the necessity of preventing the Nazis from carrying out one of those great murders of the truth which have once or twice before drenched human history with immeasurably precious blood. But, I repeat, the victory of Britain will not, in itself, do more than prevent

such a murder. In order to save the truth, we have not only to prevent a Nazi conquest, but also to wage an unrelenting struggle against our own enemies of the truth, against our home-grown Nazis; and we shall not have to go far to find them. This second struggle must, and will, go on, whatever is the outcome of the present war. Or, rather, it will go on unless the Nazis conquer, not only Britain, but literally the whole world. And even then it would have to go on, hidden deep underground in forms which we cannot imagine.

But if some parts of the world remain independent states; if, in particular, either or both Britain and America remain independent states, your task, when you grow up, will be to carry forward, on every front, the struggle for the faith which can alone redeem life from despair. And the first part of such a faith consists in the service of the truth. Therefore let me end this first part of what I want to say to you by summing up, as clearly as I can, exactly what I mean by the service of the truth.

The sentence, "the service of the truth," means something simple and definite. Those men and women, and those countries, are serving the truth who believe that it is the first part of their duty to strive to give the most accurate description possible both of nature and of human society. For them truth is not what will make Germany, or Britain, or America, strong for conquest; nor is truth what will reassure themselves; nor is truth what will bring them power or maintain them in power. The truth is what they see, hear, feel and learn to deduce from the evidence of their senses. To cling with passion to the truth in this

simple sense, to reject all phoney interpretations of what is "really" the truth; to refuse absolutely to yield to the temptation to desert the truth, for the sake of self-reassurance, for the sake of comfort, for the sake of power, for the sake of anything whatsoever—all this is the first part of a faith for our times. The most tireless efforts will not, indeed, prevent all of us from denying and deserting the truth again and again. That will not be fatal if we know what we are doing: if we know that we are doing wrong; if we know that we can only live lives worthy of men, and not beasts, if we return to the truth. But once the very conception of the truth has been abandoned; once the truth has been distorted into what will support our countries' conquests, or our own personal success, then all hope will have gone. Nothing but the hell-world which we see growing up around us can possibly result from a denial of the duty to bear a faithful witness to what we see, learn and know.

Do you, Charles, remember Miss Thoroughgood at the village school at Shalford, who first taught you about religion? Now, the religious way of putting all this is to say that, if we do not serve the truth, God will punish us after we are dead by putting us into hell, and that, if we do serve the truth, He will reward us by putting us into heaven. That has always seemed to me a very confusing and elaborate way of putting things. Indeed, a great many people today find it an incomprehensibly remote way of putting things. And the hold of this sort of religious sanction for serving the truth, and for morality in general, has

become weak. But what is really meant, I take it, by this way of putting things is that if men desert the truth then nature cannot help destroying them; that if they struggle for the truth long enough they will learn to command nature herself. And that is a fact. Indeed, the real penalties for deserting the truth are more relentless than religious people have ever suggested. In order to reassure themselves, men have said that God will forgive them. But the universe cannot forgive us. If we break its laws, because we have not had the self-control, perseverance and ability to learn them, the non-human universe will relentlessly destroy us. For, since it is a lifeless mechanism, it cannot help itself.

Let me give you an instance of what I mean. If you do not trouble to learn that when you heat water in a boiler to a certain temperature it will turn into steam, exerting an expansive force, and so do not put an outlet on to your boiler, it will burst and kill you. In just the same way, if we do not take the trouble to understand, or if we deny, that our sorts of countries are being rent asunder by the struggle of the rich to hold down the poor, we shall become the slaves of conquerors.

Neither the steam nor the social system can forgive us if we deny the truth about their real character. For they have nothing to forgive us with. They are impersonal, non-human forces which act relentlessly. But once we have recognised the expansive force of steam we can fit cylinders to our boilers and make steam do half the work of the world for us. And once we recognise the ten times stronger and more dangerous force of the social struggle

between the rich and the poor, we, the people, can remould our society so that that struggle is ended. Then, but not till then, we shall be able to build a nation capable of controlling its own destinies, and unconquerable by its enemies. If the desertion of the truth makes a hell-world, the faithful service of the truth can make us into creatures who will seem like gods when compared to what men have been hitherto. For, although lies often bring power to individual men, the truth alone can bring power to mankind.

It is for these reasons that a fanatical loyalty to the truth is the first part of a faith for which you will find it worth while to live. So long as you strive to serve the truth, your lives will never lose their significance. You may be set back, overcome and even broken. But you will still know whither you were trying to go. There can be defeat for you; but defeat itself implies that you possess a purpose which you would have carried out if you had not been defeated; a purpose which others may yet carry to triumph. So long as you have a purpose, you will never despair. But if once you desert the standard of the truth, your lives will lose their meaning. One thing will cease to be better than another. You will have no standard by which to judge things. Whatever other standards you take—be they national glory and conquest, or personal success, or wealth, or pleasure, or comfort—they will fail to stand up to the battering of our times. All such other standards will be overturned in the rack of things. They will prove themselves to be things to be judged, not stand-

ards against which to judge and measure everything else. But that can never happen to the truth. It will always be fulfilment and joy to give your lives to the struggle for more and more of the truth.

IX

Love

THE truth is a star; if we steer by it we can never wholly lose our way. But its light does not warm, for the truth is the coldest of the great ideals. The fact is a foundation of granite upon which to build our house. But it is not our house. There is another aspect of life, another ideal, or principle, which it is fatal to deny or to betray. If no life fit to be called human can exist without the struggle for the truth, no life at all can exist without love.

To the betrayal of the truth the Nazis have added the repudiation of love. To total lying they have joined total hating. This is what we mean by "ruthlessness." A man (or a government) is ruthless if his actions show a total absence of love for other men, or, in the case of a government, of love for the people. The presence of love alone provides a basis for that "decency" in the dealings of men with other men which is the opposite of ruthlessness. We may not be aware of any perceptible love for our fellow-men if and when we behave decently to them; nor may the members of a "decent" government feel conscious, positive love for the people. But, all the same, it is, at bottom, only their adherence to the ideal of the love of man for other men which can restrain either individuals or governments from complete ruthlessness.

There is no other reason for individuals, or governments, to show an often highly disadvantageous restraint and moderation in their relations to other men. For a ruthless man, or a ruthless government, enjoys important short-run advantages over more restrained opponents. Ruthlessness often pays. No judgment is less historically well founded, unfortunately, than the assertion that persecution never succeeds. Persecution has again and again succeeded in its object of annihilating, over wide areas and for long periods of time, both the persons and the opinions persecuted. The objection to persecution is not that it is ineffective. The objection is that in annihilating the thing persecuted, which may be a good or bad thing in itself, persecution mutilates the minds of the persecutors. In another, and perhaps still more important, way ruthlessness does the same thing to both the persecutors and, in the end, to the persecuted also, as does the total desertion of the truth. Persecution and ruthlessness debase and dehumanise. They destroy one of the highest functions of the human mind. They destroy the capacity to love.

It is for these reasons that love is the second part of a faith by which we may live in our times. The struggle for the right, the opportunity and the possibility to love; the struggle against everything which makes the love of men for other men impossible; the struggle against ruthlessness, in all its forms (including, above all, its less realised, invisible forms, such as economic exploitation and enforced poverty), is something to which a man and a woman may well give his and her life.

This struggle, like the struggle for truth, is worth living for, because it is so difficult. It is because hate, ruthlessness, persecution and fear are by far the easiest ways of ruling the world; it is because the world has almost always been ruled in this way hitherto; it is because never yet has it been possible fully to establish the authority of love; it is because it may never be possible perfectly to do so—it is because, not in spite of, these facts, that the service of love is a supreme service, for which we may be well content to live.

Let us have no inclination, then, to minimise the advantages of ruthlessness. These advantages are sometimes thought of as being merely military. People see that the Nazi tanks and aircraft, for instance, are at an advantage because they do not let refugees get in their way when they are attacking: that Nazi submarines do not hesitate to torpedo ships without making any effort to save the people in them, even when the ships are full of children. But this is only the smallest part of the advantages of ruthlessness. Ruthlessness is above all, a political rather than a military method. Ruthlessness is a method of rule. It is the oldest, most traditional, most firmly established method of rule in the world. The Nazis have merely carried this “well-tried” method of rule to its logical conclusion, and have equipped it with a modern technique of suppression and persecution. The Nazis have silenced, broken, tortured and murdered not only their opponents, but anyone who failed to work wholeheartedly for them. Such total coercion is a very formidable, and can be a very successful, thing. It is based upon a fully-worked-out Nazi

creed. The Nazis have an elaborate theory of human nature, which denies the importance, or even the existence, of the positive side (of the love side, that is to say) of man's emotional constitution. Nazi ruthlessness is consciously based upon the view that the love of men and women for each other, their capacity for mutual understanding, for mutual persuasion, and so for genuinely voluntary co-operation, do not exist to any appreciable extent: that accordingly fear, hatred and force are the only means by which the world can be ruled.

Many other people besides the Nazis at heart take this view. There are plenty of people nearer home than Germany who in their hearts think that all talk about love is sloppy nonsense. There are plenty of people who, whatever they may say, show by what they *do* that they think that the very idea of love, persuasion, understanding and tolerance having anything to do with public affairs is "the worst sort of unpractical idealism." They point to the historical record and ask us to tell them when or where such soft virtues as these ever ruled the world.

But this "fearfully realistic," "desperately practical" view is just as unhistorical as it would be to deny the immemorial power of fear and hate and force. The evidence of history is that love is fully as strong a force as hate. In fact, for a specific reason which I will give below, it is, in the longest run of all, an even stronger force. Love has played as decisive a part in human history as has hate. But it has played a different part; for it is a different kind of force. The truth is that throughout history there has been an interplay between these two forces: that it is a great

error to single out either the one or the other as being all-powerful.

In our day this interplay between love and hate is upon a more tremendous scale than ever before. Here and now the Nazis are making a new attempt to set up one of those world-wide empires, founded on fear, hatred and force, such as have several times before been established. There is nothing in the least fantastic about this Nazi attempt. On the contrary, there is nothing even novel about it. Indeed, from the Nazi point of view, the establishment of a new fear-hate-force empire is today the obvious thing to do in order to end the unendurable international and economic chaos of our period. This is what the Germans and Italians mean when they talk about a "new order in Europe," and this is what the Japanese mean when they talk about a "new order in Asia." But it will be, if they succeed in establishing it, the oldest "order" in the world. It will be an "order"—a system of society, that is to say—incomparably more hoary, more familiar to mankind, more incapable of bringing hope or advancement, than any which the world has recently experienced. It will be an "order" as old, and as hopeless, as the tyrannies of Rome, Egypt, the Incas or Assyria.

However, the fact that such an empire would be unendurably horrible to us is no guarantee whatever that it will not be established. On the contrary, its establishment can only be prevented by our utmost struggle; and that struggle cannot succeed unless it is waged for a higher purpose and a better faith than the Nazis have set before themselves. If we fail, the Nazis will establish their fear-

hate-force empire over all, or most, of the world. And a very efficient empire it is likely to be. No one has anything to teach the Nazis about efficiency. (No one has anything to teach them about efficiency on the restricted level of efficiency, that is to say, which is alone possible by fear-force-hate methods of rule [see below, p. 91].) Nor is there any truth at all in the idea that men cannot be ruled, for centuries at a time, in this way. A Nazi empire would be sure to function exceedingly smoothly, at the word of the command of the Prussian drill-sergeants. Moreover, a long period of world peace might be secured if such a Nazi empire became world-wide or almost world-wide. A relatively high degree of economic security might be granted, even to the subject peoples, such as ourselves, even though for us such security would be on the basis of a degradingly low standard of life. Let us make no mistake about it: such a Nazi empire is possible, and moreover millions of the worst-off, most exploited, depressed and embittered of the peoples of the world would find such an empire quite tolerable, or even preferable to the present insecurity and anxiety which is all the freedom which they have known.

Nevertheless, the establishment of such an empire would be the doom of hope. As the poet wrote, it would close the gates of mercy on mankind. For in it love would die, with truth. Not only would truth in such an empire mean nothing but what the government desired the people to believe, but the love of man would become impossible. Across the rungs of the hierarchy of slave, semi-slave, freeman and master—of subject people with E on

their shoulders, and *Herrenvolk* with steel whips in their hands—which such an empire would establish, the very concept of the universal, all-embracing love of mankind itself would disappear again from the minds of men. The very aspiration of founding human life upon truth and love, which, whether we know it or not, is what sustains us now, would slowly be given up. And then life would lose its significance.

Such final loss of significance is, as a matter of fact, why such an empire would, after centuries, inevitably decay. For gradually meaninglessness would invade it. An invisible and impalpable mist of purposelessness would descend upon the minds of its masters and its slaves alike. In the end that mist would begin to erode the efficiency of the glittering mechanism of the empire. As there could be no more truth, science would die. As there could be no more love, the bonds which in the last resort of all hold human society together would begin, little by little, to loosen. For why should even master be loyal to master; or new *fuehrer* to old *fuehrer*? Why, ultimately, should not one who wished to rule make common cause with this subject race or that—or even dare to raise the slaves? In the end feuds, *coup d'états*, quarrels over the succession, mutinies, civil wars, revolts, would rack the vast structure. Perhaps Hitler is right when he says that such an empire would endure a thousand years. Other such empires have endured about that time. It would endure a thousand pointless years, first of sterile peace and then of slowly growing disorder and decay.

That is what will happen unless we here and now pit

something stronger than ruthlessness against the Nazis. And that something cannot be just good breeding and self-restraint, old school-tie decency—the officer-and-a-gentleman ideal. For all that these things really mean is rule by a better-mannered ruthlessness than the Nazis' ruthlessness. They mean a British Empire, instead of a Nazi Empire, but still an empire. They mean a rule maintained, that is to say, in the last resort by fear and force, even if the fear and force are far less blatant: even if the velvet of the glove is twice as thick over the iron fist. We shall never stop the Nazis like that. They will always beat us at that game. Total ruthlessness and total lying will always beat ruthlessness and lying in moderation. For moderation in evil is at best a tepid sort of virtue. And the hot tide of Nazi hate is sweeping everything tepid out of the world.

The Nazis can only be stopped by a faith stronger, and in a sense fiercer, than their faith. And the only things that are stronger, and in a sense fiercer, than hatred and lies are truth and love. Love, in particular, is notoriously a very fierce business. Love is such a new principle that it still has to make its way, and often to fight its way, in the world. It is a far younger principle than the old established Nazi method of rule by fear and force. Indeed, the real question is whether the concept of rule by love is not still too wild, fierce and revolutionary an ideal to be taken seriously.

The service of the ideal of love will not be by any means a pacifist, or, unfortunately, even a peaceful, business in our times. For instance, if we stopped fighting now,

the Nazis would instantly establish their empire of hate over us, and, probably, over the whole world also. Moreover, even if we completely defeat the Nazis, the struggle to serve the ideal of love, like the struggle to serve the truth, will only be just beginning. For, I repeat, there are plenty of people in every country, including our own, who daily betray and repudiate the ideal of the love of man for man. So long, in particular, as a small class of rich men, not only monopolise most of the good things of life for themselves, but, far worse, in doing so condemn many millions of their fellow men and women to insecurity, exploitation and poverty, the service of the ideal of love will involve the most arduous and, only too often, the fiercest struggle. But one way, and a neglected way, of defining what is the object of continuing the people's struggle, is to say that it is the attempt to establish, for the first time, the authority of love upon this earth.

Thus the most searching of all questions is the question of whether love can rule. There is now no hope for us unless we can begin to establish the authority of love. It is true that love has never established its authority over the world. Perhaps it can never completely do so. Perhaps love cannot be made perfect, just as truth can never be completed. Nevertheless, the tireless struggle to extend both the authority of love and the boundaries of truth alone gives meaning to our lives.

Moreover, just as we saw that, in spite of, and actually in one sense by means of, all catastrophies and disasters, our knowledge of the truth has, over the centuries, been immensely extended, so too the power of love has grown.

The very ideal of founding human society upon the bonds of love, instead of the constraints of fear and force, would once have been inconceivable. In the strange history of the world love has known victories even greater than those of hate. The ideal of a society based upon the voluntary co-operation of free men, based upon their mutual love, persuasion and comprehension, instead of an empire of fear and force, has slowly emerged from the centuries of human evolution. It has not easily emerged. It has emerged indirectly, and often in almost unrecognisably distorted forms. It is from history that we know what would be the dreary destiny of man if a new slave empire were to be established by the Nazis; and it is from history that we may draw reassurance that love will yet dominate the world.

X

Why, Elizabeth, Love is the Stronger

You will want to know what basis there is for the assertion that, in the longest run of all, love is a stronger force than hate. Is not, you may well ask, such an assertion merely a piece of worthless, wishful thinking? If the greater part of human history has been controlled by fear, force and hatred; if all the great empires of antiquity were founded on these black forces; if every state of the modern world has at least mainly relied upon them, how can it be said that love is the stronger? Is not this just some mystical assertion having no claim to be an objective description in reality?

No, this is not so: in the longest run of all, though only then, love really is stronger than hate, and that for a perfectly definite reason. It is not only and not merely that history shows us that love can be a most formidable solvent, capable, in time, of rotting away the brazen foundations of the proudest and strongest empires. In the longest run of all, love is also, and above all, the strongest constructive force in the world.

The ultimate justification of love is biological. After all, there is no possible doubt that in the most basic sphere of human life, ruthlessness simply does not pay. To put the point in a sentence, it is no use being ruthless with a baby.

All you can do to a baby by means of ruthlessness is to kill it; and if you kill enough babies you kill the race.

This is perhaps the profoundest of all the contradictions which underlie the Nazi philosophy. Nazi doctrine is based upon "racism." The only rational justification which Hitler can find in the pages of *Mein Kampf*, for example, for his creed of force, fear and hatred is that by these means alone can the human race be preserved. Nothing, however, is in fact more certain than that the final consequences of the application of Nazi principles to the human race would be its slow extinction. The Nazis could do nothing, in the end, were they to conquer the world, but to kill off the human race. By the extirpation of love itself, by their craven worship of ruthlessness, they must in the end make the reproductive process, including, above all, the successful rearing of children, more and more difficult, and at last impossible. (The Roman rulers, who had a much less extreme creed of ruthlessness than the Nazis, were yet steadily killing off the race. In the latter centuries of the empire it was said that every third shop in Rome was kept by an abortionist.)

The simple truth is that love, tenderness, comprehension, patience and self-sacrifice are qualities just as necessary to the survival of the race as are courage and strength. If the softer virtues are destroyed, human life becomes unworkably one-sided and cannot go on. A single glance at the animal kingdom will confirm this judgment. The more successful and highly developed breeds of animals have, and must have in order to survive, strong maternal and paternal instincts. It is just a crass biological error to

suppose that the survival of the race can in the end be promoted by ruthlessness.

Love, moreover, has immense survival value, not only in the obvious case of the nurture of children. Love has overwhelming survival value in the life of adult society itself. For it is love, and love alone, which can make possible voluntary co-operation between bodies of human beings for productive purposes, or for any other common purpose. Now, voluntary co-operation is incomparably the most efficient thing in the world. It is, undoubtedly, possible to accomplish large tasks (as in the case of the building of the Pyramids), or to promote huge plans of conquest, by means of fear and force. But the overhead costs of such forced labour are notoriously overwhelming. Indeed, from a state which used compulsion alone we should have nothing to fear. If, for example, the Nazis were basing their effort to conquer the world simply and solely, and in all its details, on the compulsion of human labour, they would be quite unable to offer any society that was mainly based on voluntary co-operation a serious challenge. But, unfortunately for us, it is not the case that the Nazis, in respect of at any rate the German people, have to resort to compulsion in all the practical details of their war effort. On the contrary, they have undoubtedly been able to produce bonds of love in the relationship of the German people to each other, in some respects. It is a low, tribal form of love, with a common hatred for all non-Germans as its basis, but unquestionably it enables the Nazis to call out a fund of willing productive labour and fighting capacity, which they would be quite unable

to produce by means of compulsion alone. In the same way, it is not by any means true that the British state is relying wholly on voluntary co-operation. If the British state were of such a character that it could rely entirely on voluntary co-operation, it would be incomparably the most powerful state in the world. As it is, just as there is a substantial measure of voluntary co-operation, based on mutual love, in the interstices of the Nazi system, which, as a whole, is, nevertheless, based on the worship of force, fear and hatred, so within our system, which professes to be serving the ideal of love, there is a great deal of dependence upon coercion and force to get particular jobs done. If there was not this admixture of principle on both sides, the issue of the war would not be in doubt. For love is so incomparably more efficient than force and fear, that were our war effort almost entirely based upon voluntary co-operation, and the Nazi war effort almost entirely based upon force, we should beat them with the greatest ease.

Nevertheless, there is not the slightest doubt that in the main and as a whole the Nazi system stands for the total repudiation of love and all the values associated with it. There is not the slightest doubt that the conquest of the world by the Nazis would mean reversion to a world more starkly loveless than any which we have known for 2,000 years.

By far the most significant piece of evidence that this is so is afforded by the Nazi attitude to women. The organised degradation of women is an integral part of their theory and practice. Now, it is a commonplace of the

historians of civilisation that the position of women is an excellent index of the stage of development to which a society has reached. There is no clearer sign of the reversion of a people to an earlier and lower stage of development than a sudden move to degrade the status of women. No further evidence is needed to show the regressive character of the Nazi doctrine than its view of women. Nazis teach that women are like natives and coloured peoples—women are, that is to say, not fully human beings, but anthropoids, as Hitler says about negroes. This view of women is a logical deduction from the basic Nazi repudiation of love. For the view that women are not fully human beings is based upon the simple fact that women, on the average, have smaller physical strength than men. Therefore, if force is to be the ruling principle in the world, they must inevitably be subordinated to the will of men.

The Nazis carry into practice their view of women with characteristic German thoroughness. Their ideal is to exclude women from access to higher or indeed secondary education, and if possible from paid employment of all kinds. (Though the demand for labour for the Nazi war machine has compelled them to use women in the factories, this they have done with reluctance.) The Nazi ideal, to which they would no doubt more and more closely conform if they conquered the world, is forcibly to restrict women's activities to unpaid domestic work. As a consequence, of course, the training and general education of women would be restricted to what is necessary for this simple task.

And so, Elizabeth, your fate, in the sense of the kind of person you will get the chance of becoming, undoubtedly depends upon the outcome of this war. For do not make any mistake about it. At the present moment you are not a fixed quantity. It would be perfectly possible, in a world dominated by Nazi ideals, to restrict and distort your development in such a way as to fit you in to the narrow place which is all that the Nazis consider to be suitable for women. It may very well be, of course, that if the Nazis' attempt to dominate the world is defeated, and you get the same sort of chance in life that your mother, Celia, got, for example, you will still choose to be, primarily, and above all, a wife and mother. Undoubtedly this is the most important, difficult and highly skilled work that a woman—or, for that matter, any human being—can do. But imagine being compelled to do that work exclusively, whether you wished it or not. Imagine never having the opportunity as Celia had, of doing other kinds of intellectual work for some years first, and then turning to the family. Worst of all, imagine being compelled to do the most skilled and important work in the world—namely, the bringing up of children—while being denied access to the necessary knowledge and education, such for instance as is just being discovered in the science of psychology. Imagine the extirpation of all that knowledge, which will make the bringing up of children ten times as successful a business as ever before. But this is what will happen to you, and to all other girls of your generation, if the Nazis conquer the world. Such a degradation of women would be perhaps the greatest single

setback which the human race has ever suffered. And such a degradation of women would itself be but one consequence of the triumph of the root Nazi concept of the repudiation of love.

Who in all the world who has a daughter would not fight on for ever to prevent these things from happening?

XI

An Empire of Fear and Force was Destroyed by Love

THE Nazis are attempting to impose a new form of slavery upon the peoples of the world. Now, the institution of slavery, whether in its traditional form, or in the more subtle forms which the Nazis are developing, is the most specific denial imaginable of a common bond of love between all men. Slavery depends upon the idea that the slave is not a man, but the human instrument of another man (or that one people is the instrument of another people). The slave is not the subject, for which society is maintained, but an *object*, or instrument, by means of which society is maintained. And, naturally, if you treat men as instruments, you must not love them. You may be kind to them, as men are often kind to their dogs or their cattle. But you must not *love* them, in the real sense of treating them like men, equal in their essence to yourself. You cannot possibly love a slave, in this real sense of respecting his rights and liberties, as you expect him to respect your rights and liberties. For the essence of slavery is that the slaves have neither rights nor liberties. Therefore every slave-owning society has had to defend the theory that its slaves are not really human beings at all. It has had to pretend that they are sub-human creatures of

another clay, whom it would be contrary to nature to treat as men. It has been easier to do this when the slaves were men of another race and colour, as they were in the case of the last great slave-owning society, the Southern States of America. And it is significant that the Nazis vehemently preach the non-humanity of negroes and non-Aryan peoples generally. (See *Mein Kampf*, p. 359, for instance, where negroes are described as "anthropoids"—i.e., apes. This teaching is clearly a preparation for enslaving these peoples.)

Thus it is indispensable to slave-owners to deny the equality of man. The doctrine of the equality of man does not mean that all men are the same, or that all men are equally intelligent, strong, brave, or fitted for leadership. It simply means that all men are men: that all men, of all races and all conditions of life; that white, black, yellow and brown men; that poor men and rich men; that labourers and scientists; that housemaids and statesmen, are nothing more and nothing less than men: that each and all of the races and classes which exist in the world are capable of producing saints and heroes, leaders and deliverers. Every slave-owning society must repudiate this ideal of the equality (in the sense of homogeneity or solidarity) of man. (Just as we should expect, the Nazis do explicitly deny this ideal also. See *Mein Kampf*, p. 330, for example.) For if all men are, in this ultimate sense, equal, then the slaves are equal too, and can no longer be bought and sold, worked economically to death, kept as pets, or used for recreation. Therefore, to accept the doctrine of the equality of man would mean the end of

slavery. And every slave-owner has always believed that the end of slavery would mean the end of everything.

We have seen how and why the truth was murdered by the Roman world-rulers, and darkness came down upon the world for fifteen centuries. But, for the reasons just given, the Romans had to fight love no less bitterly than truth. The ideal of love conflicted flatly with the Roman form of slavery. The institution of slavery had probably been established in the ancient world amongst the early tribes which had originated agriculture, and so learnt how each man could produce more than enough to keep himself and his dependants. Till then, of course, a slave would have been no good, because he would have had to consume everything he produced in order to keep alive. But once a man could produce a *surplus* over and above his own necessities, that surplus could be taken from him, if once he could be enslaved.

The first slaves were probably prisoners of war. Instead of killing their prisoners, the tribesmen took to keeping them and setting them to work. It was upon the *surpluses* produced by an ever-growing army of these slaves that the ancient empires, and all their civilisation, were built up. Is it any wonder, then, that the rulers of the ancient world looked on any ideas which conflicted with slavery as dangerous, subversive, abominable ideas, as ideas which "struck at the very basis of civilisation itself"?

The ideal of love, unlike the ideal of truth, appeared in the ancient world in a form which made its destruction by the authorities very difficult. They fought it with all

the means at their command; they held it at bay for hundreds of years; they profoundly injured and distorted it. But they could not get rid of it altogether. Nor, on the other hand, did the ideal of love directly prevail against them. Slavery was ended, and the old world and its civilisation with it. But by the time that that had happened the ideal of love had become divorced altogether from the ideal of truth. Its champions had failed to recognise the other supreme duty of man—namely, to bear the most faithful witness of which he is capable as to the nature of reality. And so in the end love lost its way. In one part of the ancient world it compromised with the slave-owning authority, and in the other destroyed almost all of the civilisation which it sought to redeem.

The ideal of love received its decisive formulation in the ancient world in the form of the Christian religion. It appeared soon after the time of the foundation of the Roman Empire by Julius Cæsar. Cæsar's was a typical fear—force Empire, and it was immensely successful. It commanded, for century after century, the loyalty of millions of men. It conquered the whole known world, so that it was faced only by impotent tribes, over which its soldiers had as much advantage as a modern army equipped with tanks and bombers has over mere riflemen. It seemed to have solved all its problems. Its wealth was vast, its prestige unlimited. The very conception of a challenge to its power seemed impossible. To illustrate how men thought of it, my father once told me that when he was in Rome he saw scratched upon the walls of some public baths, which had been dug up, a line from the

Roman poet Virgil, who lived just after the time when the Empire was finally consolidated. Some Roman, as he lay drying from his bath, had scratched upon the wall a line from Virgil which means "What blood and tears it cost to found the Roman race!"¹ To this day mankind has retained this awe and wonder at the gigantic Imperial achievement of ancient Rome. And yet the Roman Empire was undone by the ideal of the love of all men, preached in the form of the Christian religion.

Naturally, it was not a mere accident that this ideal, or religion, appeared just then. Basic, world-shaking ideas such as this do not come from nowhere. This idea could not have been born unless human society had been approaching the stage of development when it could be maintained without slavery. The idea of an all-embracing human love, which excluded the possibility of slavery, could never have been born (whether in a manger, or in the minds of men, whichever way you like to put it) unless men had been approaching the point at which they had sufficient command of natural forces to be able to do without the enslavement of a part of the people, and yet to produce that surplus upon which every civilisation must be built.

In the days of the Cæsars society was approaching this point. And, sure enough, men called Christians appeared, who taught, amongst other things, that *all* men, including the slaves, were equal, in the above sense that they were all men of the same clay, with the same fundamental possibilities in them. They preached this world-shattering idea

¹ *Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.*

in the form of the doctrine that all men were equal in the sight of God; that the slave had an immortal soul as well as the patrician. But they preached it.

I do not know whether the history-books out of which they taught you when you were younger still had as one of their illustrations, a picture of Saint Augustine with some slaves brought over from Britain to Rome. Saint Augustine is supposed to have said of them, "*Non angli, sed angeli*"—meaning, "Not British slaves, but souls." That was certainly the very centre of one aspect of Christian teaching. And it was this aspect of Christianity which caused the trouble. The history-books were quite right to make a picture of the incident. But in my time, at any rate, nobody ever even tried to explain the point of the story. So I remember thinking that it was just a silly pun about "*angli*" and "*angeli*." I hope they explain things better to you; but I doubt it.

In the end, the incompatibility of this doctrine with the basic institution of slavery brought down the seemingly eternal towers of Rome. It destroyed the Roman Empire because it exposed its pointlessness. By setting up a standard, a principle and an ideal, it set at nought all purposeless power, however gigantic.

The rulers of Rome were soon well aware of the danger of what the Christians were teaching. The Roman Gestapo was soon after them. But this doctrine of the love of man had crept into the crannies, alleys and crooked corners of the Imperial structure. It appealed to the millions upon millions of the slaves, the poorest freemen, the exploited and the obscure, of that vast Empire. Such people were

hard to get rid of altogether. They were hidden in the interstices of society. The Imperial Gestapo would purge a hundred thousand or so of them here or there. But the thing was still there in the cracks. You know how a grass-blade growing in the crack of a concrete pavement will softly split the whole surface. It was in this way that the growth of the ideal of a love embracing all men broke up the gigantic stony façade of the ancient world. History shows us that, whatever else love is, it is not a harmless sort of thing that has never had any influence on the real world. It is very strong.

The Christian doctrine of a love embracing all men grew, and Rome fell. But, because the very conception of our other supreme duty—namely, the service of the truth—had been extirpated some centuries or so before the rise of Christianity, the ideal of love as preached by the Christians had nothing positive to put in Rome's place. The Christians were, on the whole, not interested in the problems of the organisation of human society. With fatal consequences, they rendered unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. The love-principle, without the truth-principle, is a dissolving force. It lacks discipline and rigour. Constructive power will only be shown by men who accept also the other duty of an unremitting search for more and more of the truth.

In particular, since the Christians were concerned exclusively with the love-principle, the abolition of slavery, as it gradually came about, did nothing for a long time to make possible a new period of scientific achievement. As the empire of force was dissolved, no new authority

took its place. In the West the outer barbarians pressed in and civilisation disappeared, almost completely in some places, to a great extent everywhere. The anti-love civilisation of a servile Empire was succeeded by the anti-love barbarism of continually warring tribes, nations and sects. Most historians have concluded that man's last state was worse than his first. Gibbon, the first man to give a general account of the fall of Rome, saw nothing in Christianity, for example, but a wholly deplorable force which destroyed a magnificent and admirable Empire. But this is as one-sided a view as that of the clerical writers who present the process as a struggle of "the good," as represented by the Christians, with "the bad," as represented by the Romans (the sort of way that Lord Halifax says that he sees this war). The truth is that the process was a two-sided one, by means of which an immense gain—namely, the abolition of slavery—was achieved, at an almost inconceivable cost—namely, the advent of the dark ages.

In the eastern end of the vast Empire the Christians compromised with the slave-owners, and there arose the slave-owning, but Christian, Empire of Byzantium. Or rather, Byzantium was a semi-Christian Empire, for the Christians had given up one of the most vital aspects of their teaching in order to make their compromise with the Emperor Constantine and thus become powerful, official and corrupt. Byzantium endured right down into our own epoch (till 1453). For ten centuries (?) it existed half slave and half Christian. It lacked both the ruthless efficiency of the old frankly slave-owning Empire and the humanity to which Christian states have at least aspired. It was a

dreadful compromise. But by means of this dreadful compromise a sort of civilisation was maintained to bridge the gulf between the ancient and the modern worlds. Humanity has more than once been reduced to such deplorable expedients. Until we have done better in our day we had better not sneer, even at Byzantium.

Over most of Western Europe (though not for some centuries in Britain) the word of love was kept alive, although in appallingly distorted forms. The barbarian tribes which over-ran the Empire were Christianised by the peoples whom they conquered during the long, confused and bloody process of the conquest. By being Christianised they were to some extent, and in some respects, civilised. The Christian Church was not so very civilised itself, however. It believed and taught the grossest superstitions. It was not merely unscientific, but specifically anti-scientific, and remained so for centuries. It was quite incapable of civilising the barbarian invaders fast enough or completely enough to save from destruction the stock of knowledge, and the outward fabric, of the ancient civilisation. The great cities of the Romans fell into ruins: their books were destroyed; their destroyers forgot how to read them; the accumulated learning of many centuries perished; the glorious roads were overgrown again; the Roman peace was shattered into a thousand petty wars. Men grew more animal as they returned to a life of brutalising labour in the muddy fields of Western Europe.

But there is another side to this gigantic breakdown. Civilisation was destroyed, but so was slavery. The way was opened to a new advance in man's command over

natural forces. In spite of the breakdown of knowledge, ordinary men, going about their hard labour, began to make inventions (*i.e.*, harness and shoes for horses, even in the midst of the dark ages). For now they were not slaves who could not benefit from any improvement in the methods of production, but relatively free, if very ignorant, men who, when they invented something, lightened their own labour. And, as both the cause and the effect of the disappearance of slavery, the barbarians were baptised into the new faith which preached, although it by no means always practised, the creed of a love from which no man was excluded.

At that immeasurable cost, significance and purpose came back into human society. The new feudal society which grew up in the Dark Ages, and which blossomed in the Middle Ages, was cruder, more ignorant, more primitive, than the slave-empires of antiquity had been. But it had a faith for which to live. It expressed that faith in religious terms. Men could live for the glory of God, the redemption of man through faith or grace, and a whole gamut of ideas associated with the Christian concept of the love of man. Moreover, there is a sense in which men really did live for these things. Of course they did not so live constantly or consistently. Much the greater part of the lives of most men of the Middle Ages was lived for their own personal cares and interests: to keep warm and fed, or to get place and wealth and power. Nevertheless, at some times and in some places whole peoples were swung into great impersonal endeavours, in which they proved, by means of activities totally inconceivable in the

old slave-empires, that they were living for an ideal. A famous instance of this is the building of the cathedrals. The cathedrals are still the largest and finest buildings in most of the towns of Western Europe. For even today, with our ten-thousand-fold increase in productive power, we have not had the spirit to raise any monument which is not dwarfed by the achievements of those mediæval centuries, in which men were still groping their way out of the darkness. During four or five hundred years men were possessed by a spirit which drove them to expend a really significant part of that tiny surplus over and above their daily wants, which was all that their ignorance allowed them to produce, upon building huge and exquisite temples for the ideal which their religion had taught them. Men lived in hovels, but God the Father, Our Lady and the Holy Spirit were a hundred times more gloriously housed than Earl and Prince themselves.

In that faith men recreated human civilisation upon a new basis and after a gap of ten centuries. Very slowly the uncouth, wild and boorish hearts of the barbarians, who had destroyed the old empires, were changed. The change of heart was mainly accomplished by means of the still-unequalled art-forms in which men expressed the ideal of love. At first they for the most part carved their ideal in stone. If by chance it still stands (it is a mile or so from an aerodrome), you will one day see on the Cathedral at Chartres the famous series of the creation. God the Father has been carved in the act of His creation, first of the day, then of the night, then of the stars, then of the earth, then of the fishes, then of the birds, then of Adam, then of Eve.

You will have no doubt as to the meaning of the message which the sculptor cut into the stone. God, he told us, created the world because He loved it. Love, the sculptor said, is the *primum mobile* (the motive principle) of all the world. Without it we perish. It alone gives purpose to our lives. For it we should live.

Do not mistake my meaning about Chartres. It will be a thousand times better that our bombers should shatter into powder each stone and each pane of glass of Chartres Cathedral, and of every other monument of Western Europe, than that we should surrender to the Nazis. For the Nazis personify the barbarian spirit which Chartres was a gigantic effort to redeem. The men who in 1940 surrendered Paris in order, they said, to save its buildings were incomparably the greatest vandals who ever lived. For the Pétains showed that they had no conception of what the pictures of the Louvre, or the statues of Chartres, were made *for*. They committed the ultimate vandalism of supposing that the stone or canvas forms were more important than the principle which stone and canvas sought to express. The simplest hod-carrier who drudged for the carvers of Chartres could not have sunk so low. For he had a faith. The great builders and painters of Europe will not have worked in vain if—but only if—we do not hesitate to destroy, if we must, the physical forms which they made, in order to preserve and renew everything to which they aspired.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages men learnt the principle of perspective painting and were enabled to paint pictures which looked real upon a flat surface. Then a

thousand brushes painted the picture of ten thousand girls holding a child in their arms. The painters called the girl Mary, the mother of God, and the child Jesus, the son of God. But what their pictures said was that fear and force and hate are insignificant, aimless, hopeless things. Love alone gives purpose to life. Love is the *primum mobile* of all the world. The vast body of European art, in sculpture, painting, writing and music, which is by far the most glorious æsthetic achievement of the world—far richer than that of ancient Greece or ancient China even—was an enormous propaganda instrument, as we should call it now, for recivilising a barbarous world.

In the beginning the work of recivilisation was undertaken specifically in the name of the Christian religion, of which love was one central theme. However, the process by means of which the ideal of love, expressing itself in this religious habit, recivilised the world, on the new non-slave basis, was enormously complex. I have here pointed out only one ideal—namely, love—out of the whole gamut of ideals which the Christian churches have preached. For Christianity reflected every aspect of the life of the epoch. It had to be as many-sided as that life itself. It was the reflection of the wishes, fears, passions and aspirations of men, projected on the sky itself for screen. The Church passed through the same stormy development as did Western man himself. Now darkness and death were uppermost, and the celibates in black ruled and persecuted and purged, till Christianity seemed the faith of hate and sterility itself. Now the sun shone again and the Church was the church of the Madonna and the babe, the symbol

of the fountain of life. The Church split when society split. When the development of new ways of using natural forces, and the general process of recivilisation, had carried men so far forward that the feudal way of life was outgrown, the struggle for the next stage of human development was fought out on the religious battle-field, within the Church itself. Reformation and counter-reformation; wars of religion; heresy-hunting and heretic-burning were the forms under which the struggle for the freer economy and society of the last four hundred years was fought out. What had once been a faith of love became a mere love of the faith, stereotyped, rigid, persecuting, inquisitorial, sterile. What had once loosened old bonds became the very chain of authority and constraint. But the Christian idea renewed itself in new and protesting forms. It changed with every change of society.

All this complex history is, however, beside our present point. What I have attempted here is, not to write a history of the Church, still less to praise or to condemn the historical role of Christianity, but merely to explain why it is that we feel as we do about the Nazis' creed of ruthlessness, fear, hatred and force. We abhor that creed and will fight it for ever, because of the whole development of human history during the last two thousand years. That development has been governed by the fall of the old empires, based upon slavery, and the emergence of a new human civilisation, capable of entertaining the ideal of love and the principle of the equality of man. That development took place, in respect both of its downward and its upward movements, under the sign of the cross. It is because

of this that we will not let Hitler build a new empire of force and fear. It is because we are the heirs of this whole immensely rich tradition of human striving that we have something to fight for—even if we have forgotten its name.

If the Nazis conquer the world, twenty centuries will have been in vain. They will set up their splendidly efficient, empty, clanging empire of servitude and force. We shall be back at the Cæsars. Everyone with an historical sense will realise with loathing that "this is where he came in." The doctrine of "the eternal return of all things," as preached by Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Spengler and the other great German theorists of despair, will have been justified by Hitler, their disciple in action. Nor is there any way of preventing that consummation of the dark prophecies except to pit a greater faith against the faith of despair. For if we do not have faith we must inevitably be conquered by the Nazis. Even if we managed to resist them militarily, we should become Nazis ourselves in the process of resistance.

But if we have faith in truth and in love, we shall find that the Nazis are weak, after all: for their faith is low, small, and weak.

XII

Christians, Nazis and Socialists

MEMBERS of the Government, especially the present (Autumn 1940) Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, from time to time inform us that we are fighting for "Christian civilisation." That is about as near as they get to stating anything in the nature of a positive war aim. It is probable, however, that for two-thirds of the British people the phrase conveys very little meaning of any kind.

The purpose of the piece of history given above was to show what, as a matter of fact, is the meaning of this phrase. We are fighting against the Nazi conception that nothing matters in this world except force, fear and hatred. Nazi ruthlessness (and it is to be found, and must be fought, amongst our own rulers as well as amongst the rulers of Germany) is the repudiation in action of the ideal of love. And the ideal of the love of man did, as an historical fact, appear in our part of the world in the form of Christianity. Therefore a Nazi conquest of the world would produce an epoch the values of which would, undoubtedly, have much in common with the ancient, pre-Christian world of the Roman Empire.

But this important historical fact does little to justify Lord Halifax in his lofty talk about "fighting for Christian civilisation." The ideal of love is, I repeat, only one

aspect of the whole body of ideas which we call Christianity, though it is undoubtedly the central theme of the gospels. Other aspects of this body of ideas are more important to many Christians. Again, certain ideas are passionately maintained by some Christians (*e.g.*, Roman Catholics), while they are repudiated by others (*e.g.*, the Protestant churches). For instance, many Christians attach the highest importance to the assertion that some or all of certain events (for example, the Virgin birth, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension) actually occurred in Palestine some 2,000 years ago. Other Christians place their greatest emphasis upon certain doctrines, such as the infallibility of the Pope, or Predestination, or the need for sexual repression, or individual survival after death, or the existence of a system of rewards and punishments after death. Some of these ideas are, it is evident from the conduct of many Christians, of greater importance to them than the ideal of the love of man.

Now, it would be preposterous to say that we are fighting for all these ideas. No Christian holds all of these doctrines. Some Christians may hold hardly any of them. Moreover, only a minority of the British people are Christians in the sense that any group of these ideas has a firm hold upon their minds. I see, in fact, that one of the Church of England writers (Miss Dorothy Sayers) goes so far as to count only 1 per cent. of the British people as still genuinely Christian today, in the sense that they have a living grasp upon one or other of the above groups of ideas, as taught by one or other of the Christian churches. Miss Sayers goes on to point out that another small minority

of the British people consciously and clearly deny that they are Christians, either by asserting that most, or all, of the above events did not happen in Palestine some 2,000 years ago, or, much more rarely, by consciously repudiating some or all of the Christian values. But by far the larger part of the British people today are neither explicitly Christians nor non-Christians (and this, I should guess, includes the larger part of the clergy themselves). On the one hand they would be pained and repelled by any assertion that the historical foundations of Christianity, or, still more, its ethical system, were false; but, on the other, none of the Churches means much in their lives, nor is any appreciable influence being exerted upon them to preserve the grip and vitality of the Christian ideals. I should not suppose that the small minority of active Christians amongst us would care, in such circumstances, to endorse Lord Halifax's sweeping claim that we are fighting for Christian civilisation.

But what we ought to be able to say is that we are fighting for truth and love. In fact, if we are to win, we have got to put ourselves into a position from which we can say that we are fighting for truth and love. For the simple fact is that we have nothing else to fight for. If we are not fighting for these ideals, for Heaven's sake let us stop the killing and make an arrangement with the Nazis as soon as possible. Truly, we must in any case go on fighting, for the sake of sheer self-preservation, until we have convinced Hitler that he cannot subjugate us. But *unless we have a faith*, it would be madness to go on for a moment after Hitler is ready to make terms, and that may be soon.

Our rich might well consider it worth while to divide up the colonies, spheres of influence, markets, sources of raw material and the other appurtenances of Empire, with him.

This is the answer to those people who tell us that this is simply and solely an Imperialist war, in which we are fighting to hold colonies for our exploitation, while the Nazis are trying to grab them for their exploitation. Undoubtedly this is *one* of the aspects of the war. In fact, in the early months of the war this appeared to me to be, on the whole, its decisive aspect. But with the new and far more grandiose attempt, which began with the invasion of Norway in April 1940, to impose Nazi rule upon the whole world, it became clear to me that this inter-Imperialist aspect of the struggle was subsidiary to the necessity to prevent a Nazi world-conquest. It became evident that to allege that the war was simply and solely of an inter-Imperialist character was another over-simplification so gross as to become a downright lie. The first thing that is false in it is the implication that it would not matter to the colonial peoples to pass from the hold of Britain into the hands of the Nazis. To suggest this is nothing less than a gross betrayal of the coloured peoples of the world. These peoples are very slowly, painfully, but yet unquestionably, winning a struggle for progress and emancipation against British Imperialist exploitation. And they are receiving an inadequate, but slowly growing, amount of help from the people of Britain. Nothing is more certain than that the total defeat of Britain would lead to the seizure of the British colonies by the Nazis. Then would begin an extreme exploitation, enslavement and degrada-

tion of the native peoples. Every possibility of native struggle and progress would be, and could be, with the greatest ease, crushed by the Nazi tanks and bombers. To suggest that there is any real possibility that the total defeat of the British Empire by the Nazis would lead to the emancipation of the colonial peoples, when it would almost certainly lead to their immensely intensified enslavement, is the grossest irresponsibility.

But the second and still greater falsehood is the assertion that the war is being waged on our part simply and solely to retain the colonies for the benefit of our rich men. It is totally untrue to suggest that the position is that the British people have no interest in stopping the Nazis from conquering the world, and are being forced to fight because the British rich cannot afford to allow Hitler to get their colonies. The real position is almost the opposite. Our rich, I repeat, might well find no insuperable difficulties in coming to terms with Hitler, who has made it clear that if he is allowed to keep Europe, he will, for the moment at any rate, make no major claim on the British Empire. And there are undoubtedly individuals amongst the most powerful in Britain who see no reason against making such a deal, who continue to work for it, and to use any sign of weakening resistance amongst the British people as an argument in favour of the necessity of such a deal. Nor is there any valid argument, from the point of view of these influential persons, against coming to terms with Hitler. *For they at heart share Hitler's outlook. They are Nazis themselves.* The real position is that it is from *our* point of view alone; from the point of view of the British

people, that is to say, from the point of view of all those who repudiate the Nazi creed; from the point of view of all those who are determined to keep open the possibility of the people's struggle for progress, that there is a fatal objection to coming to terms with the Nazis while they are flushed with their European triumphs.

The real objection to a compromise, patched-up peace, is that under it Hitler's values, Hitler's faith, Hitler's creed, would be almost certain to prevail over us. Unless the Nazi power is forced to give up a decisive part of its present dominion, the danger of any compromise peace resulting in the peaceful conquest of this country, if not by Hitler's army, yet by Hitler's faith, would be extreme.

It is easy enough to see how the thing would work out. We can easily imagine how, after a deal between Hitler and the British Government had been arranged, any real struggle against the Nazi creed of force, fear and hatred would become impossible in Britain. To denounce the Nazi values, to preach the opposite creed of truth and love, would soon be stigmatised as "war-mongering." To write or speak of the exploitation of the peoples of Europe, including, above all, the German people, by the Nazis would be considered "a libel on a friendly Power." Therefore if, *but not unless*, we really believe that the ideals of truth and love are worth living and dying to preserve, and to perfect, then we are justified ten times over in fighting until the Nazis' will to world domination has been decisively broken. But everybody who in his heart supposes that these, and all other ideals, are sloppy nonsense will find that, once Hitler's direct assault has been beaten off,

he is fighting for nothing. It is only those who believe that all sacrifices are justified if they are made in order to preserve and to perfect such things as the right of the people to struggle to improve their lot, by means of a free Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative movement (for such organisations are the practical expression of the attempt to serve the ideals of truth and love), who really have something to fight for in this war. For those who in their hearts accept the Nazi creed that all you can do with people is to coerce them by means of fear and force, the continuance of the war is, as Hitler has said, senseless.

But it will by no means do just to announce that we are fighting in the service of truth and love. Until we show by what we *do* that we are convincing champions of these ideals, a claim to be fighting for them would be hypocrisy. In this case also the most we can claim at present is that we have not, like the Nazis, specifically repudiated the ideal of the love of man. We still pay lip-service to it. That is something; but it is ten thousand miles from being enough of a faith with which to conquer the Nazis.

There are certain indispensable things which we must do. These indispensable things are very simple. They are not difficult to do in the sense that we do not know how to do them; but they are immensely difficult to do in the sense that they can only be done at the cost of infringing the rights, privileges and profits of the richest and most powerful people in the country. Here I can give only a few examples of the kind of things which we should have to do in order to make good a claim to serve these twin ideals. We should have both to make certain drastic

changes in our permanent, peace-time way of living, and we should have to begin to meet the immediate day-to-day problems of the war in a quite new way. But even in the case of the permanent changes in our national way of life, the measures must be taken *now*, so that all of us can see and feel, not that things may be different after the war, but that they are already different here and now. For it would be worse than useless to begin to make promises in this connection.

In order, in particular, to make good any claim to be fighting for the ideal of love, we must instantly stop excluding an important percentage of our people from the elementary right to work and earn. This is the simplest and biggest single change that we must make, and make now. In the twenty years between the two wars we always kept from 10 to 20 per cent. of our total population in the slow rotting hell of enforced unemployment and destitution. And, incredible as it may seem, after more than a year of war, we still keep nearly three-quarters of a million people in that condition. So long as that is so, and so long as nothing is being done which could prevent the return of mass unemployment on an even greater scale than ever after the war, it is impossible to pretend that we are fighting to do more than prevent the extirpation of the ideal of love at the hands of the Nazis. Unemployment itself, however, is only the most dramatic and obvious example of the broader fact that we so arrange our national life that we leave about two-thirds of the people of this country, in a varying degree, under-nourished, ill-housed, over-worked, exploited and insecure. So long as this is the case

it will be impossible to pretend that we are adequate champions of the ideal of love.

But the emergency of war brings out the contrast between our professions and our performances even more glaringly. The flash of the barrage has illumined, the blast of the bombs has unearthed, a degree of sheer neglect and inhumanity—in a word, lack of love—for the people of London, on the part of those who control our destinies, which has to be seen to be believed. The whole treatment of the bombed population of London on the part of many of the local and national authorities reveals that the real attitude of these authorities (with, of course, individual exceptions) is one of suspicion, apprehension and cold dislike for the people of London. In the emergency conditions of a bombed area the real attitude of mind of the authorities to the population cannot be hidden. It is perfectly true that our authorities are doing something for the people. Tardily, grudgingly, unwillingly, they are providing some sort of shelter, a little food, inadequate protection. But—and this is the decisive test—they have for the most part done these things to the least possible extent which they considered that they could get away with. There has been an unmistakable malevolence on the part of our present authorities for the dreary and bedraggled crowds which traipse away from the smashed houses, or the evacuated streets, of the London boroughs each night. Many of the things which our local and national authorities did for us (though much of their actual administrative work, as apart from their treatment of human beings, is

efficient, careful and even intelligent) revealed that they regarded us, not as men and brothers, but as an alarming, and potentially hostile, force which had to be regulated and controlled, although, if necessary, placated. If it had not been for the really considerable volume of admirable voluntary effort on behalf of the bombed population which the emergency called forth; if it had not been for the work of tens of thousands of Civil Defence and other workers; if it had not been for the vigorous and healthy way in which much of the Press voiced the public demand for better treatment, the terrible lack of love for the people shown by our public authorities would have gone far to have destroyed us.

It comes to this; both in peace-time and in war-time, our rich and their representatives say, in the eloquent language of deeds, something like this to the British people: "We are all British citizens loving each other, standing four square against the hosts of hate. But in peace-time your children must be poorly nourished or actually go hungry; consequently they will be smaller, weaker, less intelligent, less educated than they might be. And they must suffer these things in order that our children shall retain the absolute right to be perfectly fed in perfect security, out of the proceeds of your labour. In war-time, when it comes to bombing, and your little houses are smashed into rubble, we shall keep you as long as we possibly can out of the basements of our steel and concrete offices and flats. We shall allow as few of you into the Tubes as possible; we shall give you as little food and as low maintenance

allowances as we dare. And both in peace and war we shall do all this in order that at all costs the insatiable rights of property shall not be infringed."

So long as this state of things continues, the claim to be fighting, not only for the indispensable purpose of preventing a world conquest by the Nazi ideal of hate and force and fear, but, positively, on behalf of the ideal of love, is impossible to sustain. Is it any wonder that nation after nation which has treated its people in this way has gone down like a pack of cards before the blast of the Nazi war machine? God knows why we haven't. The fact that the people of Britain have so far bravely resisted the Nazi attack is far more than our rich deserve. It is partly due, no doubt, to the fact that so vile has been the condition of the people throughout the world hitherto, that even such conditions as the British people have endured for the past twenty years have been relatively not so bad—that, at any rate, the people of most other nations have been worse off. And it has been partly due, I suppose, to a sort of lingering obstinacy in the British people; to a determination that, when all is said and done, they will not be shown how to do things by the Nazis.

But not merely this emergency of air attack, but also our whole national way of life faithfully expresses the fact that our well-to-do classes, far from loving the people, regard them with apprehension, suspicion and dislike. That whole national way of life must be altered, and altered now, if we are to survive. And it cannot be altered without infringing in one way or another the property rights of the rich. Yet, granted that that infringement is made,

there are a dozen ways of giving actual and practical expression to a claim to be serving the ideal of love. For example, let us enact *now*, during the war, and for ever after the war, that every British citizen has the right to be given work by the community, at a living wage, if he cannot find any private individual to employ him. (Or he must be given the living wage without the work if the government has temporarily fallen down upon the job of organising useful production for him to do.) Or again, let us enact that every child of school age shall have paid to its mother an allowance of 10s. per week, at 1940 prices, so that, at any rate, there shall be no more hungry children in Britain.

There is no economic difficulty about doing these things; they are considerably easier to do than is the measure of industrial reorganisation which the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Aircraft Production, the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Labour and the other relevant Government Departments, are attempting to accomplish at this very moment on behalf of our war production. But undoubtedly, even the above two measures (which are suggested simply as examples of the kind of things which a community which really served the ideal of the love of man would instantly do) would involve a very considerable restriction of the property rights of the rich. In order, for example, to guarantee every willing worker a job, you would have to take steps which would limit the possibilities open to the rich to make unlimited sums of money out of the labour of their fellow-men. That is why all the spokesmen of the rich with one voice tell us that

such a measure as this (or such a measure as universal family allowances, to give another example) is an impossibility.

Have we not all read a dozen "grave warnings" from our learned bankers, our earnest railway chairmen, and our oh! so humanitarian company directors? How often have these gentlemen assured us: "No one is more appalled by unemployment than we are; but unfortunately it is all a very, very difficult and complex problem. Human wisdom has as yet discovered no solution for it. All we can do is to wait patiently in the hope that some day some wonderfully clever man will invent a way, if not to overcome, then at any rate to mitigate, the problems of unemployment and industrial depression." All the oceans of talk of that sort have been, and are, nothing more nor less than excuses for doing nothing. The truth is that the thing could be done tomorrow if anyone in authority really had the mind to do it. But it could only be done on the condition that those in authority put some ideal before the making of profits.

That was how Germany did it. The Germans began to cure their unemployment problem the moment the Nazis came into power. And why? For the simple reason that the Nazis put the ideal of the conquest and subjugation of all the other peoples of the world before the making of profits. If we were to put the incomparably higher ideal of the love and welfare of our fellow-men before profits, we should solve our economic problem. (And that is Socialism. For if truth is the father of Socialism, then love, the love of our fellow-men, is its

mother. It could not have been born without both parents. It cannot live if either parent is murdered.)

In this matter I am talking about something of which I have expert knowledge. I am by trade an economist, and for the past ten years I have carefully studied the various economic theories which profess to explain our difficulties. In fact, I have propounded some of these economic theories myself. In two recent books ("A Programme for Progress," and in a shorter version entitled "The Banks for the People") I have put forward one particular way by which the problems could be attacked. But the exact methods used are by no means the most important part of the matter. There are several methods by which we could use our admirable productive resources to provide us all with a good life. But, in order to use any of the methods, we have got to want to use them. And in order to want to use them we have got to love each other sufficiently to make our mutual welfare take precedence of the profits of the rich as the objective of economic activity. But those who hold power in Britain today do not mean to let anything take precedence of the profit-motive if they can help it. How, then, it may be asked, are we to get the indispensable social transformation made? There is only one way, and that is by a transference of power from the hands of our present rulers to those of the people.

Once that is admitted, all those who do not accept the reasons given here for preventing a conquest of this country by Nazi Germany—members of the Communist party, for instance—will immediately inquire how we

propose to effect this transference of power from the hands of the rich, while "collaborating with the rich in the prosecution of their war."

This question would be difficult to answer if the assumptions upon which it is based were well founded. If it were a case of all those who did not oppose the war being compelled passively to assist in prosecuting a war upon which the rich were unitedly intent, and which was being waged exclusively, or even mainly, for their characteristic purposes of Imperialistic dominion, then indeed the effort to repel the Nazis would involve a most serious surrender to our own rich. But the real situation is utterly different. First, the rich of Britain are by no means unitedly in opposition to the Nazis. An important section of them have always wanted, and still want, to come to terms. For it has never been, and is not now, impossible to devise a world partition which would leave a place (temporarily) for both the Nazis and the British Imperialists. In fact, it would be truer (although this, too, would be an over-simplification) to say that a section, at present dominant, of our rich were being forced by circumstances, and more or less unwillingly, to collaborate with the people in our resistance to the Nazis' bid for world conquest and subjugation. Second, it is utterly untrue to say that a determination to resist the Nazis involves a passive acceptance of the rule of our own rich. On the contrary, every day shows more clearly that success against the Nazis will only be achieved to the extent to which we overcome the suffocating power of the rich, which has brought us to our present plight, and which

still horribly impedes our effort to save ourselves. Success in the struggle with our deadly enemy without is dependent upon success in the struggle to overcome all that is worst within our own borders. But there is no possibility whatever of winning that internal struggle unless we beat back the Nazi assault.

The same principle applies even more directly in the field of the British Empire. It is true that, faced by the prospects of subjugation at the hands of the Nazis, a majority of the peoples of the British Empire are reluctant to do anything which would tend to cause our defeat. But that does not mean that we are ruling our Empire for the sake of its subject peoples. At present such a claim is a pretence. We hold the Empire, above all, for the further enrichment of our own rich, by means of the exploitation of the labour of the native races. In other words, we demonstrate a gross lack of love for these hundreds of millions of peoples, whom we rule. We cannot serve the principle of love until we cease to exploit these peoples. To cease to exploit them would not necessarily mean that all connection between us and them would immediately cease. For that would probably mean, in practice, their inevitable conquest by far more ruthless exploiters, such as Germany, Japan and Italy. But it would mean that we should immediately come to an agreement with the leaders of the native peoples. In the case of the great, mature peoples, such as the Indian races, such an agreement would undoubtedly involve their complete and genuine political independence of this country. The remaining British-Indian connection (and after 200 years there would in-

evitably and desirably be such a connection) would be such as the leaders of the Indian people themselves desired. The refusal to come to such an agreement; the obstinate insistence on the attempt to maintain an Empire which is, on the whole, if by no means so completely as would be a Nazi Empire, an Empire of the fear-force type, makes a mockery of any claim on our part to stand for the positive principle of love. So long as we go on with the attempt to hold our Empire in its present form, we can do no more than carry on our present indispensable, but yet inadequate, struggle to prevent the total victory of the forces of ruthless hate. The maintenance of such an Empire precludes us from setting up the standard of love. But it is under this standard alone that we can hope finally to conquer.

The problem of the less-developed peoples of the British Empire cannot be solved by independence. But it also can be solved by agreement with the leaders of these peoples. It is not for us to tell the leaders of the slowly, but now ever-increasingly, awakening peoples of Africa, or, to take a more developed people, of the West Indies, what they want. What the leaders of these peoples are themselves demanding are, above all, normal civil liberties, so that they may immensely accelerate the development of their peoples, by such means as the organisation of effective Trade Unions, political parties and co-operative organisations. Such developments amongst the colonial peoples are, of course, a menace to the ability of great British corporations to exploit the native labour of the Empire without let or hindrance. That is why the British govern-

ment has so far attempted to prevent them. Until we reverse the whole trend of our policy in this field we shall not have the right, or, what is more, the possibility, of raising the one banner under which Nazism can be defeated.

We ought to have done these things years before this war; if we had, we should not be undergoing our present sufferings. But now we have a new and overwhelming incentive to found our national life upon the ideal of love. For we shall be beaten if we do not. If we do not show that we love each other sufficiently to unite in face of the enemy, and to cease exploiting the peoples who have been subjected to us, we shall become a subject people ourselves, hewing wood and drawing water for the *Herrenvolk*.

XIII

Why Europe Died: and We Live

Go about amongst the people of Britain today: in the factories; in the shelters; amongst the air-men, soldiers and sailors; amongst the girls, men and women, at their work and in their homes. How nice, how decent; how honest, calm and courageous they are—and how empty-headed!

Never in all our history have we been such an empty-headed people. It is not that we are stupid. On the contrary, the British people are crammed full of technical ability of every sort and kind. Never before has there been a generation with anything like such high technical qualifications and abilities as we have. There is nothing that we could not make, or plan, or build, or do—if we set our minds to it. But we are empty-headed in the precise sense that there is no faith in our heads. Therefore we cannot set our minds to anything; for we have no general attitude of mind, held in common by all of us, to set. As a nation we have no *Weltanschauung*, as our enemies would say. (But I prefer the short, old English word “faith,” to the long, new, German word *Weltanschauung*.) Or, rather, if we have a faith (and at bottom we must have a glimmering of one, or we should have gone under this summer), we have so overlooked it that it has been three-quarters stifled.

The British people have not always been like that. On the contrary, we have always hitherto possessed a definite and articulate faith by which to live. In the Middle Ages, it is true, England was part of a Europe held together by the Christian faith in its Catholic form. And the British people lived by their own not particularly distinct, and not particularly important, variety of the general Catholic faith. It was in the next age, in the age of the Reformation and the Renaissance, that we evolved a characteristic faith of our own. That faith was, it is true, one variant of the new Protestant form of Christianity which, for certain definite, and in the last resort economic, reasons was appearing all over Europe. But the variety of Protestantism which we developed was so vigorous, and played so vital a part in the history of the epoch, that it is fair to regard it as the essential faith of the British people.

It was in the name of this Protestant, and later Puritan, faith that the British people achieved their most extraordinary triumphs. It was in the name of this faith, it was as its conscious and passionate champions that we repelled the Spaniards, the last time but one that a European conqueror sought to invade us. It was in the name of this faith that sixty years later we broke the power of our king, and the back of feudalism in Britain, set up, in the form of the Commonwealth, the first example of a modern state, and opened the way for democracy in Europe. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen who accomplished these things were by no means empty-headed. They knew precisely what they believed in; nor were they embarrassed or inarticulate in saying what it was.

They could, and did, confess their faith in the prose of John Milton. And they profoundly modified world history by doing so.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the British people still held to the Protestant, Puritan type of faith, but that faith was gradually watered down. It grew milder and more civilised, less narrow and bigoted, but also thinner and weaker. Still, it served us marvellously well; it proved a well-spring of self-assurance for further gigantic national achievements—such as beating off Napoleon, setting up the first industrialised system that the world has ever seen, and founding (partly by the foulest methods) a very odd sort of Empire. Today, in the twentieth century, all we have to live by is the remains of that Protestant, Puritan faith, which was young and strong three hundred years ago: and it is not enough. It is true that it is turning out that there is more in that faith that is still sound and valid for our day than some of us had realised. But yet many aspects of it are obsolete, and incompetent to meet the needs and problems of today.

And so, to an extraordinary extent, we are today a naked people. The bombs detonate, and we hear this or that building of London crunch down. This or that inadequate surface shelter is cracked and smashed, and the people inside it are killed or mutilated. At such a time one cannot help noticing that it is, after all, our spiritual, since it is the ultimate cause of our physical, nakedness, which is the most important factor in the situation. In the Autumn of 1940 it was not merely that Sir John Anderson had an invincible prejudice against anyone (outside of the Home

Office) having more than one or two feet of cement above his head; it was not merely that there was no adequate physical refuge from the bombs. It was that there was nothing—no faith—in our heads and hearts which (you might have thought) could have seen us through.

That must have been what, above all, Herr Hitler calculated upon. That matchless student of all that is worst in human nature observed the nakedness, the faithlessness, of the British people today. He must have concluded that amongst us there was nothing which could possibly enable us to endure, unite and resist. It was upon this, much more even than upon his predominance of bombers, of divisions, of tanks and of guns, that he relied. For Hitler, like all the greatest conquerors, believes that the importance of the moral to the material factor is as three to one.

Moreover, Hitler had, as it seemed, just proved, exhaustively, by means of half a dozen consecutive demonstrations, each giving the same result, that our kind of country falls to bits when it is subjected to really serious attack. In three months Hitler had conquered six of the capitalist democracies of Northwestern Europe. Nor was he likely to be in doubt as to the reason why these countries had fallen to bits before him.

France is, of course, the supreme contemporary example of a great nation of our type so rotted by faithlessness that she was betrayed to her enemies. The process of decay had reached a point at which the various classes—capitalists, workers, middle-class people, peasants, farmers, etc.—of France had ceased to have enough in common to enable them to hang together in the face of serious out-

side pressure. It had become impossible for them to hold in common any faith, creed or national ideal. Once a nation gets to that point it is incapable of survival. For its people have nothing for which they are willing, in the last resort, to die, since they have ceased to have any common purpose for which to live.

With the French example before us we can see how in concrete detail the lack of any genuine common faith, purpose or ideal destroys a country. The rot starts at the top. The men who hold the key positions, the men on whose decisions everything depends—the Cabinet Ministers, Generals, Admirals, Air-Marshals, bankers and great industrialists—are found to have no real patriotism left in them. As soon as they find that in order to save their country she would have to be transformed so drastically that they would begin to lose their privileges, they do not hesitate to order all resistance to cease and to deliver up the people to the Fascist conquerors. It is their treachery which has proved the decisive factor in the enslavement of the European peoples. A majority of the workers and peasants of the French army wished to defend their country against the Fascist invaders, and many of them fought hard and died in attempting to do so. (They did so in spite of the insanely mistaken “defeatist” leadership which had for nine months been given to them by the French Communist party, which was the largest French working-class party, a leadership which, however unintentionally, played, as we now know, straight into the hands of the traitors at the top.) But the country had been poisoned through and through by the stench of a decaying social

system. The sole way by which the peoples of Continental Europe could have saved themselves from the Fascist conquest of 1940 was to have overcome both the Nazi invaders and their own corrupt leaders, who were incapable of and unwilling to save them. But the European peoples had suffered too much deception and too much frustration; they had been too messed about; the French, the Belgian and the other peoples of Western Europe did not have enough to fight for in order for it to be possible for them to achieve those tremendous feats of energy and dedication which would have been necessary to win such a fight on two fronts: to win a fight against the Fascists without and the traitors within.

There was a sort of passive revenge on the part of the workers of Continental Europe upon the countries which had so deceived and neglected them. Undoubtedly some of the European workers, who had never shown any symptoms of revolt, many of whom did not even know consciously that they were dissatisfied with their lot under capitalism, yet saw no necessity, when it came to the point, to fight and die, or to sweat their guts out in the munition shops, for countries which had had so little care for them. Even workers who had resented and resisted the efforts of socialists to show them how they were being defrauded; even workers who had steadily voted for and supported their capitalists—who, in a word, had been so defrauded that they did not even know that they had been defrauded, yet showed, when it came to the pinch, that the sort of life which was all that they had been allowed to live had been too narrow, too hopeless, too insecure and,

above all, perhaps, too aimless, to be worthy dying for. Even if their minds did not know it, their hearts, and their very bodies, knew that they had been denied access to the hope and aspiration which it is the high pretension of democracy to give to all. In this way it came about that at the end even those of their rulers who wished to defend the countries of Western Europe sometimes found only shifting sands on which to build that defence. For they themselves, by the treatment which they had allowed their countries to give their peoples, had destroyed the basis upon which common resistance could have been established. Is it not a wonder that so many of the workers and peasants of Western Europe were found, in spite of everything, to be ready to fight and die for countries such as theirs had become?

The British people appear to have found in themselves resources of resistance far greater than any that the Nazis have yet encountered. As a people we have curious defects and curious qualities. And it may be that both of them will help us to endure and to survive what is coming to us. We are determined to survive—if only to give ourselves another chance to make our country, by means of our own efforts and in our own way, into something worth preserving. But we shall never do that if we do not face the fact that all this is coming to us precisely because we left in existence so much that was rotten in our country during the twenty years of peace; because during those years we failed utterly to find a faith, a creed and a common purpose which could have given us a

decent and secure life at home, and the power to defy any attack from abroad.

This book is being written when the American people are just waking to their first realisation of the necessity to prepare to resist. And they, amongst whom the rot has gone less far, will show a still higher power of resistance. Yet neither the British nor the American people can possibly succeed in their resistance if they remain as they are. Not all the skill, heroism and endurance which they will certainly display will save them; not all their vast wealth; not all their productive resources, will avail them if they do not win an internal struggle of self-regeneration more difficult than the war against the Nazi attack. If they do not begin to transform themselves, they will in the end go down to a defeat no less dreadful than that of France.

On the practical economic plane this means that neither the British nor the American peoples will be able to produce the war material without which resistance is impossible unless they begin the process of regeneration. This inescapably involves the subordination of the interests of their rich men to the national effort. It means an ever-increasing measure of just that process which the Lavals, Baudouins, Pétains and Weygands of France would not endure: which they surrendered to Fascism rather than endure. Nor should we depend upon our rich men being of a different kind from the French. Some of them may be different. But some of them are undoubtedly of the same mind as were their French counterparts—every bit as rotten, as cynical, as plain treacherous, as all

the world now knows the leaders of France to have been.

And yet, so far at least, we in Britain do endure, we do unite and we do resist. Of course we do not do so heroically, as the newspapers sometimes tend to suggest. We get frightened, we curse, we are miserable, we even get panicky sometimes; but yet we do not fall to bits, as our kind of states in Europe have fallen to bits. There is something here, it seems, which the insight of the eminent psychologist of Berchtesgarden did not adequately apprehend. Not that Herr Hitler can very well be blamed for his mistake. The thing is really very surprising. Just what it is that is sustaining us one would find it difficult to explain to him. Partly, no doubt, there is what is left of our old faith; but perhaps there is also an unseen and buried seed of a new faith. It may be that we live by an unspoken word which, in spite of everything, we shall some day utter.

Bé that as it may, one thing is certain. Things cannot go on as they are. Nature abhors a spiritual no less than a physical vacuum. *Some* new faith will rush in to fill those empty heads of ours. The only real question is whether it is to be Hitler's odious creed (imposed by him, or copied from him), or something of our own.

XIV

Leadership and Democracy

A NEW faith must be evolved out of our resistance to Nazism. Therefore that faith will be based on the antithesis of Nazi values. But how can such a faith ever come to live with us? It cannot come merely by preaching. We could talk about truth and love for a hundred years and, if we *did* nothing, we should be as far from them as ever. On the other hand, we could never mention such words as truth and love, and yet, if we began to show that we loved our fellow-men, and honoured the reality around us with the truth, we should awaken in the possession of a new faith.

However, it is necessary not only to practise a faith, but also to preach it. It is necessary not only that we shall stop half starving some 40 per cent. of our children,¹ but that we should know, and be able to say, why it is a bad thing to half starve children. We must not only so organise our economic and social life that we are capable of living at peace with the other peoples of the world; we must know, and be able to say, why peace is better than war.

To put the issue in rather a different way. We have been told a hundred times that what we want is a plan. And so we do. But what we want even more than a plan is

¹ See Sir John Boyd Orr's figures for confirmation of this assertion.

a faith. For a plan is necessarily a plan to do something. And unless you have a faith you cannot know what you want to do. As soon as you get a faith, you know what you want to do, and it will never be long before you find a practical plan by means of which to do it. That, I repeat, is the secret of the Nazis' triumph in abolishing unemployment in Germany before the war. The Nazis, less than anyone, had a plan for the solution of Germany's frightful economic problems. Hitler announced again and again that he took not the slightest interest in economics. But what the Nazis had was a faith: they had a wretched, primitive faith in Germany's mission to enslave the rest of the world. But even such a primitive little faith as that enabled them to perform what seemed miracles to the clever, faithless economists who, year after year, and ever so wisely, had been allowing seven million Germans to rot in idleness. In three years, and simply by devoting the whole resources of the country to the service of their faith, they had put every German worker into employment.

We can work the same apparent miracle, but for opposite ends. We can do so if we have sufficient faith in our ideals to put them into practice. We can set the whole nation to work in the service of the ideals of truth and love, just as the Nazis set the German people to work in the service of the ideal of conquest. Indeed, we cannot serve our ideals without setting ourselves to work. For we cannot serve truth and love without re-housing, re-feeding, re-clothing and re-educating the greater part of the population. To be sure, we shall need an economic

plan—just as the Nazis have needed various plans, devised for them mostly by Dr. Schacht. There are, I repeat, several plans by which the productive resources of the country can be devoted to a specific purpose. But the best of such plans must necessarily remain on paper unless we have a common purpose *for which* to plan. And to have a common purpose is to have a faith. If our faith is in the service of truth and of love, then our plan will be designed to devote our entire productive resources to enabling every man, woman and child amongst us to live the fullest and most developed lives of which they are capable. And that will necessitate such an output of houses, clothes, food, equipment for recreation, travel, transport, education, and every other conceivable kind of goods and services as the world has never yet seen.

Today a faith cannot be served by individual preaching or example. Organised, collective, sustained endeavour is the sole method by which an ideal can be effectively served today. But collective, organised endeavour involves leadership. We as a people cannot act until and unless we throw up leaders through whom we can act.

The concept of leadership has been prostituted, like so much else, by the Fascists. The *fuehrer prinzip* is the disgusting Nazi caricature of the entirely valid conception that in order for human beings to act effectively together they must have a responsible leader. What is vile in the *fuehrer prinzip* is not the recognition of this undoubted fact. What is vile is the mad, neurotic emphasis on a leadership so absolute that it degrades the relationship of the

people and its leader to that of unquestioned master and unquestioning slaves. But we shall never overcome the Nazis if we allow our repulsion for this *fuehrer*-madness to drive us into the opposite fallacy of denying the necessity, and for that matter desirability, of leadership itself.

The proper relationship between a people and its leaders is, perhaps, the most vital political question of our time. And it, too, is a question which will only become soluble if and when the nation as a whole is serving a faith. For satisfactory, satisfying leadership is only possible upon the basis of a mutual love between leaders and people. Such love for their leaders can only grow up on the part of the people if they trust those leaders to tell them the truth. But a marvellously fruitful relationship can appear the instant such mutual love and trust come to be felt between the people and their leaders.

Such an organic, spontaneously arising bond of love between leader and people is something very different from the fervidly passionate, but synthetic, relationship which, undoubtedly, exists between Hitler and the German people. The German situation is one of extreme neurosis. It involves the utter prostration of the people before their leader; it involves their absolute surrender to him of all will, all independent judgment, all capacity to criticise him and, in the last resort, if need be to reject him. That is what makes it beastly. That is what makes the *fuehrer prinzip* totally incompatible with democracy. In this case, also, the Nazis have rushed back to an earlier, lower, less-developed stage in human development. They

have fled back to the stage of human development in which the people have either to reject all leadership, or to accept absolute leadership (*i.e.*, tyranny). Democracy is, precisely, an extremely daring attempt, not to reject leadership (that is very easy and totally disastrous), but to combine leadership with freedom—with freedom to criticise and ultimately to reject and change the leaders.

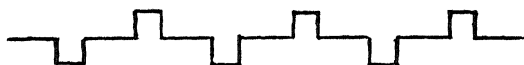
From one standpoint the ability to combine leadership and democracy is a question of mental balance. If a man is unbalanced, or if a people as a whole is unbalanced, they will be unable to do anything except either to accept or to reject their leader absolutely. They will have to see everything in terms of pure black or pure white. For them every leader will appear as a god or a devil. They will feel that they have no alternative except either to grovel before him, or to attempt to kill him. It has been an immense, and immensely difficult, achievement for men to attain to a degree of mental balance which would enable them to do better than this. The concept of the *conditional* acceptance of a leader; the possibility of loyally and devotedly serving a leader, while at the same time retaining such emotional self-sufficiency and poise that that leader can be rejected if he goes off the rails, is perhaps the highest political achievement which has yet been made by man.

The British people have undoubtedly developed, to a remarkable degree, the emotional balance necessary to this achievement. But we have not escaped the penalty of such cool-headedness. The danger of such an attitude of mind

is that it leads straight to phlegm, stolidity and, at worst, apathy and indifference. For example, the most appalling catastrophes occur because we in Britain are so determined to "keep cool," "not to be rushed," "to take it easy," that we do nothing to avert them until it is too late. (The present war itself is the crowning example of the devastating consequences of this national vice.) What we have now to do, in order to survive, is to combine ardour, thrust and dash with our existing qualities of balance and steadiness. We have been set by history the subtle problem of being fanatically balanced, passionately moderate.

Frederich Engels, the collaborator of Marx, who lived for forty years in this country, and was very fond of us (if often exasperated by us), once wrote that the English ideal was a moderately wealthy, moderately clever, moderately strong—and moderately honest man. Engels' joke perfectly hit off the vice into which our main national virtue of steadiness can degenerate. The flash of his epigram illumines the truth that there are some things, such as honesty (or truth), which we do not want in moderation, but absolutely and as a faith. But our incomparable steadiness, lit up, although not overturned, by a faith, will be, if we can achieve it (and we must), the most formidable thing in the world. It was when we had it.

If you want to envisage the possibility of such fanatical balance, consider the crankshaft of an aeroplane or motor-car engine. Next time that you are in a garage when they have taken an engine right down, have a look at, and above all handle, a crankshaft. A crankshaft looks like this:—



The zigzag, flanged bits are coupled up with the piston-rods, which drive them round the central axis of the shaft at thousands of revolutions per second. Now, there is nothing more exquisitely, more fanatically, balanced than a well-made crankshaft. It would knock the whole engine to pieces if it were not perfectly balanced and steady. And yet a crankshaft is not a stodgy, slow, phlegmatic sort of thing. It moves. It moves with extreme speed precisely because it keeps its balance, and transforms the cataract of violent piston-strokes which beat upon it into a sustained rush of silky power. That is what a people who had kept their heads, and yet had their heads filled with a faith, would be like.

It comes to this. The whole democratic attempt is impossible except upon the basis of a strong faith, held in common both by leaders and led. Unless, on the one hand, the leaders believe fixedly in some faith outside of themselves, they will believe in nothing but retaining or improving their personal positions. And, on the other hand, unless the people have a faith, they will not care enough about public affairs to change their leaders before they fall into anarchy—from which they will be “saved” by being pushed by some *fuehrer* into the dreary pit of tyranny. Without a faith there will be no adequate standard by which to judge men and their actions; without a faith there can be no sense of common purpose between

leaders and led; and without that sense of common purpose there cannot be mutual love and mutual trust.

Therefore a faith is indispensable. We shall not, however, come to possess a faith—or, rather, a faith will not come to possess us—except by works, in the old theological sense of that term. A faith will not come to live with us until we begin to do things which are a sign both to others and to ourselves that we are indeed serving truth and love. Today that means, above all, the carrying through of that transformation of our whole social and economic way of life without which to talk of loving our fellow-men is a mockery and to pretend to the truth is a lie.

Can we do it? We cannot tell till we try. But it is certain that if we cannot, we, the British people, shall soon die. We shall cease to be one of the great, free, self-determining peoples of the world. There is no room on the planet for us as a secondary fear-force empire, half-heartedly aping the Nazi methods—ruthless, but “really not quite so ruthless as they are, you know.” The Nazis can always beat us off the map at their own game—at which they are past masters.

There is no room in the world any more for us unless we begin in actual and unmistakable practice to serve those ideals about which we talk. There is no room at all for us unless we become the sort of country with which, for instance, the leaders of the Indian people can, and with whom they will desire to, co-operate. There is no room for us unless we become the sort of country in which the whole people have a stake. In order to survive

we shall have not only to stand as a rock against the Nazi flood of filth—this we already do—we shall have to light a beacon of hope for the world.

We cannot do it unless every man and woman of us in the millions of positions of responsibility which already exist in this country begins to lead. We cannot do it unless every one of us, from the youngest shop steward to the Prime Minister, not merely does his duty (that will not be enough), but begins the transformation of our country. That means, in practice, that no one of us should rest while we see around us the crass inhumanities, barbarities, injustices and inequalities of today: that each one of us should shout and kick and protest and fight till these things are ended. There are vital, simple things which must be done if we are to win the war, such as the human treatment of the bombed; there are permanent things which must be done if the peace is to be worth having (such, for example, as the guarantee of work and with it a guaranteed standard of life, for all). In Britain we shall only achieve these things by means of a fight of the whole people, from below, from the middle and from above. The interests which stand in the way are the interests of private property run mad; they are the interests of private property turned into monopoly; of a greedy, evil, stupid, inhuman, fear-ridden, but tiny, minority of the population, which must be overcome if our country is to live. Our war is only partly a war against the Nazis: it is equally a war against those amongst us who, whether they know it or not, at heart share the black

Nazi faith. We cannot win this double war unless out of our present sufferings there grows a faith, and unless out of that faith come works, which will make us once more the champions of "the last, best hopes of man."

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